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MOURINHO
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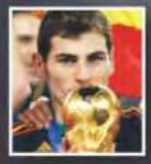

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January 2011

IF ONE SINGLE incident crystallised everything that is wrong with Sepp Blatter's FIFA, it was the reaction to the bribery allegations made last month by the BBC's *Panorama* programme. The International Olympic Committee, an organisation forced into reforming itself following the Salt Lake City bribery scandal of the 1990s, asked to see the documents obtained by *Panorama*. The documents contained serious allegations about African confederation president and IOC member Issa Hayatou.

FIFA, by contrast, posted a simple message on its website: "The investigation and the case are definitely closed." FIFA's three wise monkeys had spoken: hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil.

Is FIFA corrupt? Did Russia and Qatar use their undoubted financial power to unduly influence FIFA ExCo members on the vote for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup? The simple answer is that we do not know. FIFA's complete lack of transparency does nothing to assuage the serious and genuine concerns that exist throughout the game.

What we do know is that two ExCo members were revealed as corrupt – but only because *The Sunday Times* exposed their corruption. If Amos Adamu and Reynald Temarii had not been caught by a courageous – and expensive – act of journalism, they would have survived to play a full role in the bidding process.

As it was, the multi-billion dollar decision was taken in secret, behind closed doors, by 22 men rather then 24. Does that make it any better?

Blatter, hiding in Zurich behind Swiss law, says it was a "clean" process. Until FIFA makes the process transparent – by, for example, publishing the details of exactly how the ExCo members voted – we must reserve judgment.

That may sound like sour grapes from a publication with its origins in England. But our concerns are for the long-term credibility of an organisation where abuse of power has now become commonplace.

The 2018 and 2022 decisions were a victory for football's new world – a slap in the face for the English-speaking old order. Russia, with a long and rich football heritage, will be deserving World Cup hosts in 2018. England must face the reality that their lack of involvement in FIFA's myriad committee structures, not to mention the Premier League's lack of enthusiasm for FIFA's other activities, such as the world under-17 and under-20 tournaments, played a key role in sealing the fate of the English bid.

However, the decision to award Qatar the 2022 finals requires a complete suspension of reality. It placed politics before common sense and, more importantly, financial motives before footballing interests.

The FIFA ExCo demonstrated their complete disregard for FIFA's motto – "For the game, for the world" – and opted for a tournament that best suited their own interests. When you consider that the typical ExCo "experience" of a World Cup involves being chauffeur-driven between first-class airport lounges, five-star hotels and stadium hospitality, it is perhaps not surprising that they ignored the interests of ordinary fans and plumped for Qatar.

The ExCo arrogance extended to criticism of the media. That's the same media who, through the purchase of TV rights and the provision of space for sponsors, supply the revenue that keeps FIFA in the style to which it has become accustomed.

The danger for FIFA is that it has turned the World Cup into a travelling circus. Club football, with its more stable playing environment, now offers a far greater spectacle. Playing the World Cup in excessive heat in Qatar in summer 2022 will further diminish the televisual occasion. It will only accelerate the rise of club football at the expense of the international game.

Will FIFA see sense? Perhaps all we can hope for is a little more honesty from FIFA. More honesty on questions about Blatter's salary. More honesty about ExCo members' expenses. More honesty about how decisions are made in FIFA House.

Transparency is an alien concept to FIFA. But the world is watching to see if FIFA can adapt to a more demanding environment – or die.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
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Boiling point...conceding five goals in the *clasico* was clearly too much to take for Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos as he loses his cool with Barcelona captain Carles Puyol

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Snow patrol...clearing the pitch before Young Boys' Europa League game against Stuttgart

Russian guard...Zenit fans are kept at bay by riot police in St Petersburg

Teething problems...Monaco defender Petter Hansson loses a false tooth in a clash with Arles-Avignon's Deme N'Diaye

worldmags

Brian Glanville

...on FIFA's choice of Russia for 2018...Abramovich still calling the shots at Chelsea...the eccentric talent that is Jermaine Pennant

"IF YOU WANT the devil," my grandfather in Dublin used to say, "you've got to go down to hell for him." But sometimes even that isn't good enough.

Beyond all doubt, England had far and away the strongest case for putting on the 2018 World Cup. And how we abased ourselves, how we grovelled. Never could I have envisaged the nightmare of the prime minister of Great Britain, David Cameron, going cap in hand to the ineffable Jack Warner, whose machinations in the realm of World Cup tickets are scandalously well known.

But the words of the leader of the English delegation, one Andy Anson – no I'd never previously heard of him, either – were all too cringingly relevant. "The FIFA ExCo is a brotherhood," he so rightly said. "If you hurt one, the others feel it."

A brotherhood indeed, including reprobates who, as that excellent and relevant *Panorama* programme showed and proved, have embezzled, in the shape of three of the brothers, no less than £64million.

Andrew Jennings' devastating report on turpitude within FIFA was not at all the mere rehash of earlier revelations which nervous members of the England World Cup bid had asserted. True, we heard again of the ticket scam of Jack Warner and the story of the $1million bribe to Joao Havelange, originally sent to FIFA by error. But to learn that three members of the World Cup committee, South Americans Ricardo Teixeira – Havelange's son-in-law, unless I'm mistaken – Nicolas Leoz and Issa Hayatou, who was a presidential candidate in 2002, had between them pocketed £64m in bribes from sports marketing company ISL was shocking in the extreme.

Accused...ExCo members Leoz (top left), Teixeira (top right) and Hayatou

Never mind, in the old Sicilian saying, at FIFA "one hand washed the other", the award of the competition to Russia comes hot on the heels of the categorisation by American diplomatic sources of that benighted country as a mafia one. And to choose it, FIFA have had to ignore their phoney policy of kick out racism, which is endemic in Russian football. And can Russia really build all those new stadia and, at last, modernise their creaking airways? Promises, promises...

If there were anything of value to emerge from this fiasco it would be the creation of a new world federation.

Between the two world wars, England twice withdrew with the other British nations from FIFA, returning only in 1946, and that was only over so-called broken-time – "shamateur" – payments. Perhaps it would have been better had they all stayed out. But then, money talks: even if the Dutch decided that FIFA's demands were so huge that they'd have been vastly out of pocket if they had won the right to stage the 2018 World Cup

FIFA has been beyond redemption since Joao Havelange ejected Stanley Rous in 1974 and created the monstrosity of greed and chicanery that it is today.

CHELSEA may seem in turmoil but their billionaire oligarch owner, Roman Abramovich, floats serenely above the conflict, even if some believe he has engendered it.

His sacking of Ray Wilkins, for whatever reasons, has plainly distressed manager Carlo Ancelotti and the players, while insult was plainly added to injury by the contentious appointment of obscure Nigerian Michael Emenalo – whose previous coaching role was with a girls' under-12 team in Tucson, Arizona – as Wilkins' successor.

The rumours now are Abramovich wants to replace Ancelotti with Pep Guardiola, having, it seems, already potentially acquired the former Barcelona winger turned director of football Aitor "Txiki" Begiristain.

The implications of Abramovich's desire to have Guardiola and Bergiristain at Stamford Bridge is evidently to have Chelsea playing like Barcelona, which is easier said than done. Though Barcelona, despite their great financial problems, are happy and ready to splash out on the likes of David Villa, their refulgent success has been based on a thriving youth scheme, which has sent one dazzling young player after another into the top team – even if the odd one, such as Cesc Fabregas, has been lured away.

By contrast, and thus seemingly the reason for the ousting of Frank Arnesen from his hugely lucrative role as supreme recruiter of talent, the youth policy at Chelsea, costly as it has been, has shown disappointingly scant results. Leeds United had to be paid massive compensation for a couple of teenagers brought from Elland Road to Stamford Bridge, but where are they now? The latest rarity, a teenaged

> "England had far and away the strongest case for putting on the 2018 World Cup"

In charge...Abramovich

player who seems more than likely to make the grade, in the shape of the gifted midfielder Josh McEachran, had come to Chelsea before Arnesen, who cost £5million when joining from Tottenham Hotspur, arrived.

Here you can, I think, see Abramovich's point: what, he might indeed have asked himself, had he been paying Arnesen for?

The more time passes, the less sensible it seems to have sacked Jose Mourinho, whose subsequent triumphs with Internazionale and his appointment at Real Madrid confirmed his status and virtuosity as manager and coach. Guus Hiddink was a good appointment, certainly, but he was never going to stay, while Avram Grant's appointment seemed based on friendship rather than objectivity, even if he did manage to take what was still essentially Mourinho's team to a European Final they hardly deserved to lose.

Chelsea's recent form, and I've seen a number of their matches, has, if anything, taken one back some years to when Chelsea were renowned for their inconsistency, beating the best but losing to the worst. The worst I saw them play was certainly in the abject loss at home to modest Sunderland. The best was arguably at Birmingham City, where they were defied by the superb goalkeeping of Ben Foster and lost to City's only shot of the game.

The absence of John Terry from central defence has certainly been crucial, while his England colleague Frank Lampard has also been an expensive absentee. Yet when you think of how much of Abramovich's money has been spent, you tend to wonder why the first-team squad is so flimsy in certain areas, not least in central defence since Ricardo Carvalho was sold to Real Madrid and no real replacement has arrived.

Abramovich, who was so impatient with a brief, bleak spell under Mourinho, has to his credit always yearned for bright, attacking football. But how much worse have things been this season under Ancelotti, even if such failures have surely been mitigated by the absence of key men?

I HOPE Tony Pulis at Stoke City succeeds in his ambition to keep Jermaine Pennant permanently, despite the fact that both his salary and his contract with Real Zaragoza are a very high financial hurdle.

Pennant, whose whole career, almost from adolescence, has been one of controversy and confusion, has long impressed me as an outstanding, if eccentric, talent, and one of whom I have three major memories, with three different clubs.

First, an evening game for Arsenal at Highbury, when he ravaged the Southampton defence and scored three goals. Secondly, a dynamic display in the FA Cup for Watford against a bewildered West Bromwich Albion, inspiring his team's success. Third, an astonishing afternoon at St Andrew's for Birmingham City, whose manager Steve Bruce had rehabilitated him after he'd gone to gaol for a driving offence: and aptly described him that day as "unplayable."

Consistency has never been his forte. When he joined Arsenal as a schoolboy from Notts County there were bitter wranglings between his father and his agent before the deal was done. A harbinger, perhaps, of a tumultuous future. But of his unusual talent, there is surely no doubt. ●

Talent...Pennant

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Top corner...Conti

1 Daniele Conti, Cagliari v Udinese
Superb technique to turn and volley into the top corner

2 Sidney Sam, Bayer Leverkusen v Kaiserslautern
Positions himself before executing a 20-yard guided volley into the net

3 Lionel Messi, Barcelona v Villarreal
Plays a couple of one-twos with team-mate Pedro and finishes with a deft chip over the keeper

4 Tino Costa, Valencia v Getafe
Controls the ball on his chest before slamming a volley into the top corner

5 Patric Cabral Lalau, Avai v Internacional
A move of one-touch passing at pace, finished neatly after only 17 seconds

6 Emanuel Gigliotti, Novara v Siena
A super move as the ball does not touch the ground

Chip...Messi

AND ONE THAT SHOULD HAVE GONE IN...

Jakub Blaszczykowski, Borussia Dortmund v Freiburg
"Kuba", as he is known by the Dortmund fans, seemingly can not fail to score after finding himself with no opponent and an open net, but somehow he contrived to blast the ball over the bar

Over...Blaszczykowski

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

NUMBERS GAME

684
passes by Barcelona in *El Clasico*

331
passes by Real Madrid in *El Clasico*

0
times Jose Mourinho has coached a team to victory at Camp Nou

$15m
Zinedine Zidane's fee to support Qatar's 2022 bid, according to reports in Australian media

11
goals conceded by Internazionale in this season's Champions League group – more than in the whole of last year's campaign

13
seeded teams from the group stage that are through to last 16 of the Champions League

850
games Ryan Giggs has clocked up for Manchester United following his substitute appearance against Valencia in the Champions League

148
goals scored in the six Club World Cup tournaments prior to the 2010 competition in the UAE

2
FIFA ExCo members who voted for England's 2018 World Cup bid

REPORTS we couldn't make up

Cards on the table...Domenech prepares for the Ultimate Poker Fight

WHAT RAYMOND DID NEXT

Raymond Domenech, the pantomime villain of France's World Cup debacle, has a new job: promoting an online poker tournament.

He appears in an advert for The Ultimate Poker Fight, in which he turns his back on football for the final time after suffering a disappointing defeat and heads to Thailand. He then meets a grand master of poker who teaches him how to perfect his poker face and becomes the best student in the class.

Very theatrical though it may seem, it is not a million miles away from the truth. Not only is Domenech an amateur thespian, he is also a keen poker player and his wife, Estelle, has worked for the television station Paris Premiere which broadcasts the Aces Tournament.

Domenech recently took part in The Ultimate Poker Fight but finished in 955th position.

FOLLOWING IN SUGAR DADDY'S FOOTSTEPS

Confusion surrounds the intentions of Arkady Abramovich, son of Chelsea owner Roman, who was reported to have expressed an interest in buying a stake in Copenhagen, one of the success stories of the 2010-11 Champions League.

Abramovich Jnr recently had a meeting with Carsten Koch, boss of pension fund Loenmodtagernes Dyrtidsfond that holds a 30 per cent stake in the Danish champions.

The Danish FA have, however, ruled out any involvement for Abramovich senior. "We are aware of the interest in FC Copenhagen by Arkady Abramovich," said FA president Allan Hansen. "It would not be possible for his father to be involved in a takeover, because any individual is only allowed to own one club."

Danish dreams...Arkady and Roman Abramovich

Picture: Mark Pain/Rex Features

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

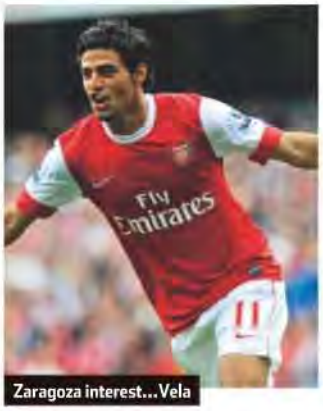
- Tipped off that Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho wants more depth in the striking department, *Gazzetta dello Sport* believes the "Special One" could raid his old club Internazionale for Diego Milito.

Inter target...Milito

- According to sources in Rome and southern Germany, Bayern Munich are hoping to bring in Lazio's Uruguayan keeper Fernando Muslera as the long-term successor to veteran Hans-Jorg Butt.

- *Le Progres* in Lyon have heard a whisper that Marseille will be strengthening their squad in January with Rennes defenders Rod Fanni and Kader Mangane.

- *Sky Sport Italia* think there is every chance Fiorentina striker Alberto Gilardino will move to Juventus, with Italo-Brazilian target man Amauri heading in the opposite direction.


Zaragoza interest...Vela

- Spanish radio station Cadena Ser are running the story that Arsenal's Mexican forward Carlos Vela is on his way to Zaragoza.

Paul Gardner

Crossing one of the game's big problems

AROUND 10 YEARS ago, the English decided that David Beckham was the world's best crosser of the ball. Only the English could have dressed up that limited talent to make it sound like a super-skill as they, above all other nations, nurture such an obsession with crossing that they have turned it into the fundamental of attacking play, convincing a large chunk of the soccer-playing world that this is the way things should be.

The idea has the beauty of simplicity, or at least of simple-mindedness: away goes the winger, over comes the cross and here comes the centre-forward to bludgeon the ball into the net. Anyone can understand that; I could, when I was about five years old. But, I don't know, shouldn't things have developed a bit since those far-off days?

Recently, during an English Premier League game on TV, the commentator – a former England international – hailed the arrival of a late defensive substitute with the comment that "he delivers good crosses". A few minutes later an attacking sub came charging on to be greeted with "he delivers crosses into the box". As it happened, in the few remaining minutes, neither player managed a cross. But there had been plenty during the game. I re-watched and counted 31. The score was 1-0 and the goal did not come from a cross.

I decided to compare the stats from a Spanish game (Barcelona v Racing Santander) with those from an English match (Everton v Manchester United) and discovered there were almost three times as many crosses in the Premier League game. I repeated the exercise, comparing another English game (Sunderland v West Ham United) with another Barca match.

Admittedly, this second Spanish game was a very special one, with Barcelona thrashing Real Madrid 5-0, but so what? It did contain some crosses, 10 in fact, which, when set aside alongside the 31 from the English game, nicely confirm the 3:1 ratio.

More important, and much more exciting to me, was the confirmation that crosses are highly inefficient at producing goals. Of the nine Barca goals, not one came from a cross – which I'm calling any aerial ball delivered into the penalty area from a wide position, but from no further than 30 yards away. I haven't included corner kicks.

In the intricate network of passing movements that led up to Barcelona's five goals against Real – the first of which involved a 32-pass sequence – there was only one aerial ball.

The way Barca play on the ground inevitably reduces the cross to just another, not that frequently used, option; a way of occasionally varying attacking movement.

We've seen this style before in the way that the great Brazil teams played, though the more recent Dunga-inspired versions have been less devoted to it. Given that the style is widely praised, and that Spain and Barcelona are currently making it highly successful, it's reasonable to ask why it isn't more widely copied.

The answer, I suppose, is it's too difficult. "You need special players," is a response I've heard. Yes, you do – but how many countries or coaches are out there looking for and encouraging players like Xavi and Andres Iniesta?

We're talking about the difference between artistry and crudity.

Barcelona's attacking moves feature highly accurate and properly paced passing on the ground. They need cleverly timed – but not extravagantly energetic – movement off the ball. Compared to those skills, crosses are far too frequently a lazy, slipshod way of delivering the ball to a team-mate.

If crosses are meant to be passes then most of them are inaccurate. But the object of most crosses is more about hope than accuracy. Given the dense crowding in modern-day penalty areas the best that can be hoped for is to deliver a cross that the goalkeeper can't reach but which encourages him to go for. After that, it's a matter of hoping for the best – even though defenders win the vast majority of crosses. There is the hope of a team-mate latching on to the second ball or the knockdown amid scenes that are not likely to add great beauty to the game.

When your style goes looking for knockdowns, you don't need players like Xavi or Iniesta.

Certainly, the swift execution of a winger's run, a cross on the run, and a flying header on goal, has immense beauty. But how many times does that happen? These days, rarely.

When people complain about the lack of goalscoring in the modern game, at least some of the blame can be laid on this extraordinary devotion to the outdated and far from intelligent use of crosses; a stylistic quirk that is not only inefficient, but that stands in the way of the development of a much more dangerous and beautiful attacking game. ●

"Confirmation that crosses are highly inefficient at producing goals"

Hopeful...Younes Kaboul of Tottenham Hotspur (left) gets in a cross

David Conn

After humiliation in Zurich, the backlash

AFTER THE one-vote humiliation FIFA delivered to England's hopes of hosting the 2018 World Cup, it was painful to see the bid team fall into Sepp Blatter's cunning trap. The 72-year-old fox of FIFA had stood, hands on the crucial envelope, and reminded his audience that modern football was created in England, and, he said, its prime quality was teaching people to lose.

Then he played his Russia and Qatar card, and England's bid team erupted into a fit of moaning. Andy Anson, the bid's chief executive, who had made such aching efforts to insinuate the bid into the executive committee's good books, immediately called five of the committee men liars for allegedly saying they would vote for England. Anson also repeatedly alleged collusion between Spain 2018 and Qatar 2022, a breach of the bidding rules, which Anson had not complained about before.

A fortnight earlier, England's bid team had written to all the executive committee members to distance the bid from the BBC's *Panorama* programme, in which the journalist Andrew Jennings rounded off a decade of investigating FIFA by naming three members of the ExCo he alleged had taken huge bribes in the 1990s.

The letter said the bid team had tried to persuade the BBC not to show the programme, and begged that England not be "judged negatively" because of the programme.

"It has been a difficult time for FIFA," the letter sympathised. "And as a member of the football family, we naturally feel solidarity with you and your colleagues."

That solidarity evaporated the second they discovered all their efforts had netted precisely one vote – besides that of England's own Geoff Thompson – and the acting FA chairman Roger Burden stated FIFA ExCo members, whom his organisation had courted for two years and on whose behalf he had castigated BBC journalists attempting to expose corruption, were now irredeemably untrustworthy.

Three lions...(left to right) Prince William, Cameron and Beckham

Having waited exactly a week for all this sound and wind to blow itself out, Blatter returned to say his piece, stating quite piercingly that England were bad losers. Another mission accomplished for the sly power-broker of Zurich.

And so the fallout from another failed bid began, with the FA's chairman-in-waiting Burden stepping down after his first look at the international scale of the job. An assessment of where it all leaves the English FA needs to take account of many sides and contradictions. Some commentators, including newspapers like *The Sun*, which had originally castigated the BBC for "sabotage" for broadcasting the *Panorama* programme suddenly became inflated with outrage at FIFA and suggested England should detach themselves, even form a breakaway.

Then there were experienced football people – watching with horror as Anson moaned so long and loosely about FIFA liars and bid collusion – who feared that was setting the FA's relations with the international governing body back almost to irreparable.

The FA woke up in an icy winter without the World Cup which would have dazzled us all, and made national heroes of David Cameron, David Beckham and poor Prince William, that unlikely ambassador for the people's game, whose monarchist speech in Zurich had gone down so badly with the men from former colonies he was trying to charm.

The bid itself was emblematic of the English approach to football, and sport in general. The country has struggled to shape a modern coaching culture, and grass-roots facilities are still widely horrible, but there is an obsession for hosting the big, commercial, televised events to evidence a love of watching sport.

A monument to that inversion of values is the £757million Wembley Stadium, its massive girth devoted to a dizzying range of corporate eating and drinking.

The battered old FA has its home there now, its good people trekking through rundown Brent to the palace of gluttony where they try to shape a youth-development policy, while the Premier League has grown mighty and fought all FA efforts to govern it. It was a defining episode to have Anson and his team trumpeting England's great assets, the Premier League clubs and their fine stadiums, and the money that would be made from a World Cup, while England's actual football team slumped out of the tournament in South Africa. Meanwhile, the FA limped on after Lord Triesman's exit without even a chairman.

And so, deflated, filled with sudden outrage at a FIFA to which they were sucking up until the moment of defeat, the English FA must pick itself up, dust itself down, and somehow try to shape itself and a convincing sporting future at a Wembley built for feasting. ●

"Andy Anson, the bid's chief executive, immediately called five of the ExCo men liars for allegedly saying they would vote for England"

HEROES...

Generous gesture...Riquelme

INVERNESS CALEDONIAN THISTLE

The Scottish Premier League club went a full calendar year without an away defeat in the league.

CIARAN KELLY

The Sligo Rovers reserve goalkeeper saved four successive penalties in the FAI Cup Final shoot-out victory over Shamrock Rovers.

Good travellers...Inverness hail an away goal

JUAN ROMAN RIQUELME

The Boca Juniors midfielder offered to return all his wages for the 2010 apertura campaign after injury restricted him to just one-and-a-half games for the season.

DIMITAR BERBATOV

The Bulgarian scored five goals in Manchester United's 7-1 win against Blackburn Rovers to end a personal goal drought stretching back to September.

& VILLAINS

Head case...Cesar complains about Eto'o

SAMUEL ETO'O

The Internazionale striker was banned for three games despite the referee missing his head-butt on Chievo defender Bostjan Cesar.

JASON STEELE

The Middlesbrough goalkeeper gave away a penalty and was sent off 13 minutes into his debut for England Under-21s after appearing as a substitute against Germany.

LUIS SUAREZ

The Uruguay striker and Ajax captain was banned for seven games after he bit opposition winger Otman Bakkal during the goalless draw with PSV Eindhoven.

Outraged...Flores

QUIQUE SANCHEZ FLORES

Atletico Madrid's coach lost his temper during the 3-2 home defeat by Espanyol. He clashed with their captain, Luis Garcia, and had to be restrained by the players.

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Dario Conca

Argentinian playmaker who made Brazilian champions tick

BRAZIL

LITTLE KNOWN in his native Argentina, diminutive left-footed attacking midfielder Dario Conca was the key creative force behind Fluminense's first national championship for 26 years and was the clear choice as player of the season in Brazil.

Conca played all 38 rounds of the competition – a remarkable achievement since, in a World Cup year, the action pauses for six weeks, leaving a fixture pile-up which causes many players to buckle under the strain. But Fluminense's No11 played through the marathon unharmed.

Conca was the team's second-top scorer with nine goals, but his real value came in the number of chances he set up – both with his intelligent, probing passes from open play and from a succession of deadly free-kicks and corners. The quality and consistency of Conca's displays meant it hardly mattered that, on his comeback to Brazilian football, Deco ran into injury problems and barely featured.

Conquering Brazil is an unlikely turn of events for a player deemed not to have made the grade by River Plate, where he was given only one start and a couple of substitute appearances. In common with a number of recent Argentinian playmakers, it took a spell in the less-demanding environment of Chilean football to give his career some momentum. Conca had a successful spell with Universidad Catolica between 2004 and 2006, yet still made little impression when he returned to his homeland and joined Rosario Central.

So he was something of a gamble for Vasco da Gama when they took him to Rio de Janeiro in 2007; but after one good year there he moved across town to Fluminense, where in the course of three campaigns he has become ever more influential.

With Serbian playmaker Dejan Petkovic the decisive figure in Flamengo's title win the previous year, the clear conclusion is that Brazil offers opportunities for players of this type. Defensive lines operate deep so there is space on the field and there is lots of protection offered by the referee. And, even if Brazilian football has struggled of late to produce the collective-minded playmaker, there are plenty of rapid attacking full-backs and skilful strikers to provide options for a man with an eye for a pass. Further evidence for this view has been provided by the strong performances for Cruzeiro of Walter Montillo – like Conca, an Argentinian playmaker who struggled at home before exploding in Chile and now Brazil.

Conca's triumph in Brazil has done wonders for his profile back home. A recent survey in Argentinian sports daily *Ole!* found an overwhelming majority in favour of giving him a chance in the national team. A few months ago those same voters may not even have known who he was.

Now 27, Conca might appear sceptical about his international chances, but the 2011 Libertadores Cup will give him an excellent platform to push his case.

Tim Vickery

worldmags

Eric Gerets

Atlas Lions' new Belgian boss ready to upset his homeland

MOROCCO

HAVING TAKEN over his new role as coach of Morocco in November, Eric Gerets' exalted position among the legends of Belgian football might be under threat in the coming months as he battles with the country of his birth for playing talent.

Since his tenure at Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia came to an end following their Asian Champions League semi-final, Gerets – who won 86 caps as a right-back for *Les Diables Rouges* (the red devils) – has been making it his mission to tap into Belgium-born Moroccan talent to strengthen his new side's chances of qualifying for the 2012 African Nations Cup finals.

Waiting game...Chadli (right) has not yet decided to stick with Morocco

Liege-born winger Nacer Chadli of Dutch club Twente was capped in Gerets' first game in charge, against Northern Ireland, but as this was only a friendly he has not yet closed the door on a possible future role with Belgium. "I will only make a definite choice once I figure out what is best for my career," says Chadli.

Also in Gerets' sights is Mehdi Carcela, the Standard Liege striker who has played in two friendlies for Belgium and was called up by new national coach George Leekens at the start of the Euro qualifiers – only to rebuff the invitation and ask for time to consider overtures from Morocco.

After meeting Gerets, the 21-year-old, who was born in Liege to a Moroccan mother and Spanish father, has said he now wants to play for the north African side. However, because he has previously played in competitive games at under-21 level for Belgium, he will have to go through the process of applying to FIFA to switch his national status.

"He has filled in the declaration that he wants to play for Morocco," explains Khalid Laraichi, general secretary of the Royal Moroccan Football Federation. "And once the procedure is complete he will be Moroccan."

While Carcela has presumably been persuaded that Morocco offer a greater opportunity to play in a future World Cup finals, one of Belgium's key squad members is the Everton midfielder of Moroccan descent, Marouane Fellaini.

Belgium can also look to the case of Yassine El Ghanassy, a 20-year-old winger with Gent who changed his allegiance in the other direction. Born in Belgium, El Ghanassy had outings with Morocco's junior sides and had hoped to follow in the footsteps of his father, Hajjaj, before having a chance of heart.

He received formal FIFA permission last February to switch his allegiance as the Belgian FA pushed through the process, though he is still waiting for a cap.

After missing out on the game against Russia in November, El Ghanassy said: "I'm disappointed, but it's not that bad. I thought because it was a friendly that the coach might want to make some experiments but that was not the case. It's up to me to keep working hard to get my chance."

Mark Gleeson

worldmags

Eden Hazard
Criticism from national team boss helps Lille starlet recapture his form

FRANCE

FOLLOWING HOT ON THE HEELS of Rennes and Brest, Lille were the latest minnows to top the ever-changing Ligue 1 table in a country that has been used to seeing no one but the big boys of Lyon, Marseille and Bordeaux finish as champions over the past nine seasons.

This season has provided a breath of fresh air and the latest bright young thing to claim the plaudits is Lille's attacking midfielder Eden Hazard.

At just 19, the Lille youth-academy product has already played close to 100 games for his club and been capped 17 times by Belgium. After making his first-team debut in September of 2008, Hazard's meteoric rise had seemed unstoppable – until he suddenly found himself on the bench following a sluggish start to the current campaign.

Belgium national boss Georges Leekens took it upon himself to publicly criticise the player, claiming that the youngster needed to work harder, both physically and mentally, if he wanted to get back to his brilliant best.

It was too harsh an attack on such a young guy according to Lille manager Rudi Garcia, but since the chastisement Hazard has come roaring back, recapturing both his place in the Lille side and his best form, while also notching a couple of goals into the bargain.

But just how good is he? According to Lille skipper and France midfielder Rio Mavuba: "He is not the biggest, but he's got immense talent. He's got great technique and a good eye for goal. He has everything he needs to be a big success".

He has also got good genes. Not only was his father, Thierry, a professional in Belgium, but his mother, Carine, also earned a living playing the game, while his younger brother, Thorgan, is already on the books of Lens.

Although Anderlecht wanted him from the age of 10, Hazard wasn't ready to leave home until he was 14 – when he chose Lille over the club from his homeland. "Anderlecht only talked about the sporting side of what they did," he recalls. "At Lille they were keen to discuss the football, but also schooling and how they would look after me. My mum and dad were very keen for me not to neglect my studies, so Lille was the best option."

Having got over his early-season troubles, it would appear now is the time for Hazard to push on. "He can do everything," says Pascal Plancque, the former reserve team coach at Lille. "But what makes the difference between a good player and a great player is the ability to do things at speed.

"He can do everything quickly – and do them really well."

Meanwhile, with Arsenal and Liverpool among those who are reported to be watching his progress with interest, there is a final word of warning from Garcia, who says: "There are loads of players who've played a few games in Ligue 1, who have even represented their country once or twice, but who have then disappeared and we never hear of them again.

"Eden needs to keep his feet on the ground, his head out of the clouds and he needs to keep working on his game."

Howard Johnson

Making his mark...Hazard celebrates a goal against Brest with a personal message

Javier Pastore
Argentinian talent blossoming for Palermo

ITALY

THE CELEBRATED Argentinian sports monthly *El Grafico* recently dedicated its front cover to the Argentina and Palermo striker. They even suggested that the 21-year-old could become *"el socio perfecto"* (the perfect partner) for none other than Lionel Messi. Yet Pastore's reaction to all the praise was typically understated.

"A player like Messi comes along every 30 years," he says. "Maybe off the field, we are a bit similar – reserved and maybe a bit shy – but I can tell you one thing, though: I've never lost a game of PlayStation against him."

Enthusiasm for Pastore comes as no surprise. At the end of a year which saw him make three substitute appearances for Argentina at the South Africa World Cup finals, he is currently one of the brightest notes in current Italian football. He has been the sublimely creative mastermind behind a Palermo attack which has played some of the best football seen so far this season in Serie A.

Along with Slovenian midfielder Josip Ilicic and Chilean striker Mauricio Pinilla, Pastore has been key to an excellent autumn that saw Delio Rossi's Sicilian side establish itself in the upper reaches of the table. Even painful setbacks such as elimination from the Europa League and a last-gasp 1-0 loss to great southern rivals Napoli haven't dented the notion that Palermo can cause problems for anyone in Serie A.

Pastore's role in all of this has not gone unnoticed. His club's owner, the volcanic Maurizio Zamparini, has allegedly put a £40million price tag on his boy-wonder's head after it was reported that Barcelona, Real Madrid, Juventus and Napoli have all shown an interest.

Elegant, blessed with terrific close skills and fast in both mind and body, Pastore has earned himself intimidating comparisons with the likes of Kaka, Zidane and compatriot Riquelme. These may be exaggerated, but they are at least accurate in one sense as he is the kind of player who can make an attack really buzz, playing in the old inside forward position behind his strikers while still regularly getting on the scoresheet himself.

Having joined Palermo in the summer of 2009 from Argentinian side Huracan for around £5m, Pastore was given only limited possibilities by then coach Walter Zenga who tended to play him as a left winger. With the arrival of Rossi in November 2009, he has blossomed into the "main man" – the player who is constantly expected to solve all of Palermo's problems.

Even if he cannot always live up to that billing, he nonetheless remains a player for whom all is possible. When he replaced Sergio Aguero in the 77th minute of their game against Greece in the World Cup last summer, coach Diego Maradona gave him simple instructions. "Diego just told me to trust my instinct, just like he did," he recalls.

It seems as though old Diego recognises talent when he sees it.

Paddy Agnew

Keir Radnedge

Blatter's legacy

The controversial decision to award the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar respectively demonstrated how FIFA is determined to take the tournament to new territories – even if that means upsetting traditional powers

LEGACY IS THE buzzword of sports-event bidding, its significance having been enhanced by every successive round of awards by FIFA for the World Cup and by the IOC for the Olympic Games.

Originally, finding a host for world football's showpiece was the opposite of the latest intercontinental battleground. The test was not deciding between a cluster of outstanding candidates but finding anyone at all.

In 1966, for example, FIFA – almost unnoticed – was grateful to be able to accept offers to stage the 1974 finals in West Germany, 1978 in Argentina and 1982 in Spain. Three World Cups were awarded simultaneously and hardly anyone noticed.

Until then it was FIFA congress who decided. But after Colombia withdrew from its scheduled 1986 hosting – wanting to revert, impossibly, from 24 teams to 16 – the executive committee took over. That original power grab owed everything to *force majeure* as FIFA had to find a new host at three years' notice – and

Read more from Keir Radnedge at worldsoccer.com

the ExCo has retained that ultimate power of patronage ever since.

Post-Zurich, demands to revert to the congress vote may appear attractively democratic but would be quite the opposite. FIFA has 208 member associations, so with its 10 members South America – for which Argentina and Uruguay are early contenders for a 2030 centenary co-hosting – would never see the World Cup again.

Dramatic change

When FIFA initiated the two-cup bidding process in December 2007 the ExCo knew it would also be concluding the episode. What members did not know was that the context of the award would change dramatically before December 2, 2010.

In inviting bids from Europe, Asia, Central & North America and Oceania, the ExCo did not know how remarkably its own organisation would pull off the construction, administration and organisation of the 2010 finals in South Africa.

Nor did it know that all the positive signs offered by the Rainbow Nation in hosting the Confederations Cup in the summer of 2009 would, that September, help persuade the IOC to break new Olympic ground by sending the Games to South America – to Rio de Janeiro – for the first time.

Those two developments shifted the foundations of the bidding process, undermining the old world dreams of England, Holland/Belgium and Spain/Portugal – even allowing in the latter two cases that FIFA president Sepp Blatter never countenanced a repeat of FIFA's co-hosting nightmare of Japan/Korea in 2002.

Along the way another new truth had evolved; the fact that the South Africans, whipped along by FIFA, had built an entire World Cup infrastructure in four years nullified the perceived bidding superiority of highly developed nations such as the United States and England.

The trouble was they did not realise it – hence the fury fest which followed those "D for Disaster Day" defeats in Zurich. The Americans took it better than England, but then the US finished runners-up to Qatar. Much of England's screaming and squawking was due to the humiliation of a first-round exit with only two votes.

Nine bids for two cups meant only two could ever emerge as winners, with seven as losers. But there was nothing constructive for the losers in seeking to justify defeat with allegations of corruption and broken promises; far better to understand why Russia and Qatar won – and store that knowledge away in the filing cabinet for a far-off day when the bidding invitation comes round again.

None of this is to deny that FIFA – as analysed ahead of the event in the December issue of *World Soccer* – is an organisation damned with an inadequate ExCo structure which skews undemocratically the rudders of power, and hence the

PRESS REACTION

"The people who criticised the British media for exposing corruption within FIFA should hang their heads in shame"

Daily Mirror (UK)

Bidding system must change for the better

All our own work...FIFA exco members have a front seat at the hosting announcement

FIFA secretary-general Jerome Valcke has said that the bidding system will not be changed, but the next round is at least eight years away so, while he was defending the status quo, no one can say what will happen next time.

However it is possible to suggest what should happen.

If the decision – which always has a significant political element – is to remain the preserve of the exco then that needs to change. It needs direct representation from the active strands of the worldwide game: the leagues, the clubs, referees, coaches, women's football, even the media.

The only representation they receive now is indirectly through the committee chairmen who are...the confederation nominees.

Furthermore, in order to prevent self-perpetuating self-interest, no one should sit on the executive for more than three successive four-year terms. For the sake of credibility, that should probably also include the president.

As for the bidding process, FIFA cannot adopt all of the IOC system that bars informal contact between bidders and voters because bid-nation representatives may be on the exco. But it should consider whether they are allowed a role in the final vote.

The bidding process needs refining, again in the manner of the Olympic Games with

PRESS REACTION

"FIFA executive committee members have confirmed that the lingering backlash against the British media following explosive corruption allegations counted against England and contributed to a humiliating defeat"

The Guardian (UK)

United in disappointment...young fans in Manchester cannot take in the fact England will not be hosting the World Cup in 2018

constant evaluation leading to an early elimination round of no-chance candidates, with a maximum of only four or even three going forward to a vote which – again to regain lost credibility – should be open.

FIFA very nearly exacerbated the secrecy storm in Zurich when it decided that the round-by-round voting figures would remain confidential. They would not be released even to members of the executive committee and certainly not to the media.

That decision was reversed after the ballot had been undertaken, but it remained deeply unsatisfactory that the aftermath led, inevitably, to so much guesswork, accusation and counter-accusation over voting identity.

Motivation was a suspect factor for all the losers. FIFA's senior vice-president, Julio Grondona of Argentina, had to dodge questions over allegations of a proposed $70million rescue grant from Qatar to the Argentinian federation, while UEFA president Michel Platini was accused of voting for Qatar on the orders of French president Nicolas Sarkozy for commercial reasons.

The inducements issue remains a grey area. England traded on the aura provided not only by David Beckham's stardust but by their academy coaches and happily arranged friendly internationals in far-flung, exco-centred countries including Qatar and Thailand – which has since been cancelled. Australia, meanwhile, gifted pearl cuff links and pearl necklaces to exco members at a FIFA Congress dinner in Sydney hosted by FFA boss Frank Lowy.

Other, perhaps more subtle methods of persuasion, were undertaken. As Russia's FIFA veteran Vyacheslav Koloskov said: "President Dmitry Medvedev met heads of foreign states and spoke about our bid with them. Prime minister Vladimir Putin didn't simply declare support for the bid like other countries' heads of governments, he met at least a third of the exco members."

No wonder then, perhaps, that one-time FIFA insider Guido Tognoni concluded: "Really, the most transparent method would be to draw lots."

How the World Cup votes went

2018

Round 1

England	2 votes
Holland/Belgium	4 votes
Spain/Portugal	7 votes
Russia	9 votes

With no absolute majority, England – whose bid had the fewest number of votes – was eliminated

Round 2

Holland/Belgium	2 votes
Spain/Portugal	7 votes
Russia	13 votes

Winner with an absolute majority: Russia

2022

Round 1

Australia	1 vote
Japan	3 votes
United States	3 votes
South Korea	4 votes
Qatar	11 votes

Australia eliminated

Round 2

Japan	2 votes
South Korea	5 votes
United States	5 votes
Qatar	10 votes

Japan eliminated

Round 3

South Korea	5 votes
United States	6 votes
Qatar	11 votes

South Korea eliminated

Round 4

United States	8 votes
Qatar	14 votes

Winner with an absolute majority: Qatar

creation of such a disastrous bidding and voting procedure.

Russia and Qatar won for a variety of reasons, but one was mutual: both benefited from the South African revelation that, post 2010, the World Cup can be staged, with equal confidence, just about anywhere. The biggest-ever and smallest-ever prospective hosts both capitalised on that happy turn of events.

England, Spain and the US were stranded by the realisation that the concept of a "safe" bid had become irrelevant. England, in particular, had invested far too much confidence in Blatter's comment that it could "stage the World Cup next week". The trouble was, the 2018 World Cup was eight years away, rather than eight days, and almost anyone can build the infrastructure in that time.

Other features of the dramatic last hours offered fool's gold.

The value of the final presentations was vastly overrated; a gesture for the television age and little more. Indeed, should the destination of a World Cup be decided on a 30-minute slice of video-slick salesmanship? Of course not – not even when a prince and a prime minister had been parachuted in as super-salesmen to rescue a bid which was already beyond salvation.

That said, the presentations were revealing. The Russian effort was all about what the World Cup would do for Russia, while England – preaching a message of global largesse – could hardly say the same about an already satiated domestic scene.

Alexey Sorokin, the Russian bid CEO, had told me several months earlier that a good presentation could not win votes but a bad presentation could cost votes – notably those of any waverers in the second or third rounds. Is that how the US lost it?

Qatar staged the best of the nine presentations: multilingual and with an engaging narrative. By contrast, the US were let down by their biggest names: Morgan Freeman, the Oscar-winning actor who could not be bothered to memorise his lines, and Bill Clinton, the former president who went seven minutes over time because he wandered off message promoting his own charity foundation rather than the World Cup bid.

As overrated as the presentations was the process of the technical inspection. This task took Harold Mayne-Nicholls and a six-man team on a two-month circumnavigation of the World Cup bidders. Mayne-Nicholls may well reflect bitterly on this as he was away from Chile so long that his domestic opponents mounted

PRESS REACTION

Awarding a World Cup to Qatar is the biggest football joke of all time

Dagbladet (Norway)

PRESS REACTION

What's the point of the inspection reports? Why a secret ballot? How can South Korea get five votes when it is exchanging fire with the North? To these, and other questions, we will probably never get the answers

Gazzetta dello Sport (Italy)

Fallout...players like Michael Essien (left) and Nemanja Vidic could leave

Quitting Zurich would be disaster for England

LEEDS UNITED and former Chelsea owner Ken Bates led calls for England to quit FIFA and go it alone with, perhaps, support from the other British home nations. Others, such as Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, insisted it was more sensible to work for change from within the world federation.

Leaving FIFA would have disastrous consequences as it would also mean leaving UEFA. Thus...

- English clubs could no longer play in European club competitions and the national team could no longer play in the World Cup and European Championship.
- The Premier League would therefore no longer attract the top foreign players which drive its worldwide appeal.
- The quality of football would suffer, so its commercial value to sponsors and television would fall.

This in turn would lead to...

- The likes of Manchester United, Arsenal and Chelsea being pushed to the brink of financial disaster.
- Top English players would therefore go abroad.
- And the quality of football would drop still further.

PRESS REACTION

Qatar's bid to host the World Cup in 2022 would increase the commercial value of football in the region by as much as $14bn over the next 12 years

Arabian Business magazine

Middle East triumph...Sepp Blatter hands the World Cup to the Emir of Qatar and his wife

a successful coup against his federation presidency. Also, only three ExCo members apparently requested full, printed copies of his completed "bible".

The McKinsey corporation, commissioned by FIFA to analyse the bidders' commercial potential, could have collected all the essential information at a quarter of the cost and in a quarter of the time.

As an aside, the ExCo's reaction to McKinsey's assessment refuted criticism of FIFA as intent only on plunging its nose into the deepest commercial trough. While England and the United States boasted a 100 per cent moneymaking rating from McKinsey, Russia and Qatar offered the least.

Greater resources

Russia won because, right from the outset in December 2007, they invested far greater resources in every aspect of their bid – from the philosophy, to the concept, to the politics, to the infrastructure, to the business intelligence, to the strategy, to understanding FIFA and Blatter. And to the voters.

Further, their bid was directed from the most powerful office in the largest state in the world – that of prime minister Vladimir Putin – not from a side office in the Russian Football Union. Presumably the knowledge that one's work is being overseen by the former head of the KGB is a greater incentive than knowing it is being overseen by the latest new placeman leading the Football Association on any given day.

By comparison with Russia, which started work with a commitment and focus from a long way back, England only got its act together just before the World Cup finals when David Dein – who, to his vast credit, put the frighteners on all England's rivals – came on board. But by then the game was up and Russia already had its core votes counted.

Russia put state resources into the bid, England "just" £15million – and the bid bosses had to find most of that themselves as Gordon Brown's promised contribution had to be winkled out of a fading government. No wonder bid CEO Andy Anson was so effusive about David Cameron's contribution by comparison.

England's infighting also played into the Russians' hands as Lord Triesman allowed ego to overcome common sense in appointing himself as bid president.

As Qatar's English PR guru, Mike Lee, observed: "Leading the FA you'll make enemies; leading a bid you have to make friends. The

PRESS REACTION

On the face of it, awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar – a desert state smaller than Connecticut with little soccer tradition and oppressive heat in mid-summer – does not make much sense. But for those who know FIFA...it was not entirely unpredictable

Washington Post (USA)

Has Temarii's blunder hastened the end for Oceania?

Suspended...Temarii

OCEANIA can no longer justify holding either its status as a confederation or its place on the FIFA executive committee. Two of the last three ballots for World Cup hosting rights have seen its representative effectively run away before the vote.

In 2000 the then Oceania president, Charles Dempsey, flew home to New Zealand, blaming death threats. His absence allowed Germany to beat South Africa 12-11 rather than the ballot ending 12-12 and allowing president Sepp Blatter to exercise his casting vote in favour of South Africa.

This time around the Oceania president who may well have wiped his confederation off the football map was Reynald Temarii from Tahiti.

Temarii had been suspended from all football for a year and fined by the FIFA ethics committee for his loose talk to *Sunday Times* journalists. That ban, along with another for Nigeria's Amos Adamu, reduced the executive committee to 22 members.

Blatter pointed out that a suspended exco member could be replaced for the ballot as long as he waived the right to appeal. Oceania expected Temarii to make that sacrifice for the good of their game and the acting OFC president, David Chung from Papua New Guinea, flew to Zurich on the Sunday before the ballot. Temarii, however, insisted on maintaining his appeal, meaning Chung had endured a wasted journey.

Oceania was therefore unrepresented when the exco took the decisions that set FIFA's political and financial direction for the best part of the next two decades. Australia lost an ally in exco discussions and then a vote in the ballot.

Questions were raised about Oceania's viability after Australia's defection to Asia in 2006, but New Zealand's lively World Cup showing in South Africa put the issue on ice.

Had Temarii accepted his punishment – which was not for corruption in any case but on lesser, technical grounds – he would probably have had his ban commuted at FIFA congress next spring.

Now such magnanimity may be denied to both him in the short term and Oceania in the long term.

We've lost...Australian fans in Sydney hear their 2022 bid has failed

PRESS REACTION

This will be a stimulus for modernising football facilities in a culture characterised by toleration of match fixing

Kommersant (Russia)

It's all yours...Blatter congratulates the Russian prime minister in Zurich

Putin's glory – how the Russian leader played key role in victory

VLADIMIR PUTIN flew to Zurich only after learning that Russia's bid had triumphed. His decision to stay away – "so as not to put external pressure on the exco members" – had duped both the Russian and the international media into thinking the bid was sinking. So did some of the Russian bid team.

Putin revealed at a victor's press conference that his worried officials, in a late-night phone call, had urged him to join in the lobbying. He refused. Clearly, he knew more than they did.

Not that Putin's Q&A session was all plain sailing. All along, much of the Russian media has been sceptical about how the state will fund the massive construction tasks ahead.

Bid leader Alexey Sorokin had assured listeners throughout the process that all the resources were in place, but Putin's responses told a different story.

Venues and regions beyond the FIFA-approved clusters, he responded, would not benefit from the World Cup-led development work, adding: "We cannot afford to develop everything everywhere all at the same time. We start with the priorities of FIFA for 12 or 13 cities within reasonable distance of each other."

Listening to Putin, unable to suppress their delight, sat the entire Russian bid team. Star names included first deputy prime minister Igor Shuvalov, sports minister and exco member Vitaly Mutko, bid CEO Sorokin, former internationals Rinat Dasayev and Aleksey Smertin, and Olympic pole vault gold-medallist Yelena Isinbayeva. Also there was Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich to whom Putin gestured, saying: "For example, Mr Abramovich has plenty of money."

Doubtless Chelsea's owner will not be the only oligarch who understands that it makes sense, from all possible perspectives, to come forward with an open wallet.

The fact that Russia has never hosted the World Cup worked in its favour, though security will be a concern as well as the enormous distances between venues. The four venue clusters stretch from the separated Baltic port of Kaliningrad to Yekaterinburg in the Urals on the fringe of Siberia – and the poor safety record of domestic airlines was picked up in FIFA's inspection report.

Putin's counter was to come up with late, extra undertakings. Russia will adopt the "Olympic option" of having match tickets double as visas and will provide free ground transport for ticket-holding visiting fans.

He insisted: "There are a lot of misconceptions of Russia from previous times, from the Cold War era. But come and see how we will prepare for the World Cup and you will gain a very different perception.

"You can take my word for it that the 2018 World Cup in Russia will be up to the highest standards, with new modern stadia and facilities which will be built in time and to perfection."

To hit that deadline, the Russians had been warned by FIFA inspection leader Harold Mayne-Nicholls that they would need to start working within hours of winning the bid. The party atmosphere in Zurich suggested that the start might just have been delayed a little.

Helping hand...Abramovich

same man can't do both."

And what of the negative British media coverage of FIFA? Did that make a difference?

Frankly, much as *Panorama* executives might like to pride themselves in thinking so, it's doubtful. Blatter, a Russia supporter and opposed to the co-hosting bids, reminded his ExCo of the unwelcome publicity. But the most the *Sunday Times* and the BBC achieved was to hand half-a-dozen ExCo members an easy excuse for reneging on apparent promises to vote for England.

The most one can assume is that the triple crown – *The Mail on Sunday's* Triesman knifing, *The Sunday Times'* despatch of the two most expendable ExCo members and *Panorama's* resurrection of the decade-old ISL issue – helped finesse Russia to victory in the second round rather than the third.

As one American Cold War veteran mumbled: "Couldn't have done it better if they'd been set up, could they?"

Holland/Belgium surprised even themselves by reaching the second round in the ballot, while the fact that Spain/Portugal finished so strongly was down to Spanish federation president Angel Maria Villar's political overtime. The Iberian federations put minimal resources into the effort. At least Villar, in his emotional and desperate presentation address, solved the joint-bid mystery: the original idea came not from Spain but from Portugal, whose federation president Gilberto Madail was the tail wagging Villar's dog.

Far clearer

The 2022 confrontation was far clearer. In the closing stages of campaigning it was obvious that Qatar and the US were way ahead of the field. Japan and South Korea were handicapped by having been co-hosts as recently as 2002, while Australia suffered from lacking an ExCo member, from being represented by too many Europeans and – as a consequence of both – failing to construct the voting alliances it needed.

As for the US, its bid effort lost momentum over time while its ambassadorial celebrities appeared to have been chosen with an eye more on the domestic rather than international audience. When it came to the ballot, a clutch of Europe's ExCo members proved reluctant to direct a World Cup into the hands of CONCACAF supremo Jack Warner.

Qatar spent more money than all the other bids put together, their "Expect Amazing" advert blazed worldwide and even fringing the pitch in the *clasico* between Barcelona and Real Madrid three days before the FIFA ballot.

Above all, however, Qatar got the politics spot on. The voting patterns suggest that the "arrangement" with Spain – collusion was not proven – held up successfully for the Qataris at least. Their success was, for most insiders, less of a surprise than that of Russia.

Both now take on a new challenge to establish their hosting credibility.

Russia may find that easier as they prepare a work-around-the-clock strategy and Putin leans on the likes of Roman Abramovich, Alisher Usmanov and their fellow favour-seeking oligarchs to stump up much of the essential construction cash.

Qatar, having come up with solar-powered systems to ensure air-cooled stadia, air-cooled training grounds and air-cooled fan fests, must now not only build the venues but also the playgrounds which will keep the world's fans happy – and air-cooled – between games.

While the 2018 World Cup in Russia will be the last of the traditional World Cups, Qatar 2022 must be something entirely different.

Both, at least, tick the legacy box; Sepp Blatter's legacy, that is. ●

PRESS REACTION

The outcome is more significant than minor personal grievances. The winners [Russia and Qatar] are the bids who looked to the future, not towards the past like England or even towards the present like Spain. Heritage and tradition no longer counts for anything

France Football

PRESS REACTION

Finance minister Alexei Kudrin's estimates that the cost will not exceed that of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics must be questioned. Independent analysts estimate it will cost twice as much and come in at more than $50bn

Vedomosti (Russia)

World Cup votes for sale

Sunday Times deserves FIFA's Fair Play award

ON JANUARY 10, in Zurich, FIFA holds its annual gala and the major social event of the world federation's year sees it present a host of awards – of which FIFA's Fair Play prize should go to *The Sunday Times*.

Had it not been for the newspaper's painstaking, time- and money-consuming investigative work then Messrs Adamu, Temarii, Fusimalohi, Aloulou, Bhamjee and Diakite would still be talking corrupt practices in the grandest corridors of world football. All that was new material, unlike BBC TV's *Panorama* programme.

Jerome Valcke, FIFA's secretary-general, in response to a question about the credibility of the World Cup bidding disaster, told an ethics committee media conference: "This has shown we have all the tools to ensure that no one can challenge the way we run the [World Cup bidding] process."

But where were these tools when the likes of Adamu and Temarii were talking corrupt practices? Easy: nowhere to be seen – until after *The Sunday Times* got to work and shamed FIFA into wielding them.

Full credit to ethics chairman Claudio Sulser for taking the decisions he did – kicking out Adamu and Co was much more drastic than most observers had expected. Unfortunately, he diluted the effect by laying into *The Sunday Times*.

"You [journalists]," said Sulser, "need to establish real facts, not those which could lead to sensationalism and to selling more newspapers."

As he rambled on about ethics in the media – this as a representative of a body which has just banished six of its own senior officials over corruption allegations – one wondered who was more at fault? Was it the suspended six or the newspaper which exposed them?

It was almost as if what had upset football's hierarchy the most was not corruption at the heart of its power base but the exposure. FIFA has no mandate to lecture the media on ethics. As the Zurich daily *Tages-Anzeiger* suggested when the story broke: "Blatter should thank the journalists." January 10 is the perfect opportunity.

worldmags

16 Russia World Cup 2018 stadia

1 NIZHNY NOVGOROD STADIUM, NIZHNY NOVGOROD (44,899)

2 RUBIN STADIUM, KAZAN (45,015)

3 MOSCOW REGION STADIUM, MOSCOW (44,257)

4 KRASNODAR STADIUM, KRASNODAR (50,015)

5 SPARTAK STADIUM, MOSCOW (46,990)

16 KALININGRAD STADIUM, KALININGRAD (45,015)

12 ST PETERSBURG

14 YAROSLAVL

1 NIZHNY NOVGOROD

2 KAZAN

3 5 6 7 MOSCOW

16 KALININGRAD

10 SARANSK

15 YEKATERINBURG

9 SAMARA

VOLGOGRAD 13

8 ROSTOV-ON-DON

4 KRASNODAR

11 SOCHI

0 SCALE 1000M

0 100KM

6 **DYNAMO STADIUM, MOSCOW** (44,920)

7 **LUZHNIKI STADIUM, MOSCOW** (89,318)

8 **ROSTOV-ON-DON STADIUM, ROSTOV-ON-DON** (43,702)

9 **SAMARA STADIUM, SAMARA** (44,918)

10 **SARANSK STADIUM, SARANSK** (prov 45,015)

11 **SOCHI OLYMPIC STADIUM, SOCHI** (47,659)

12 **NEW ZENIT STADIUM, ST PETERSBURG** (62,000)

13 **VOLGOGRAD STADIUM, VOLGOGRAD** (45,015)

14 **SHINNIK STADIUM, YAROSLAVL** (44,042)

15 **CENTRAL STADIUM, YEKATERINBURG** (44,130)

12 Qatar World Cup 2022 stadia

1 **QATAR UNIVERSITY STADIUM, DOHA** (43,520)

2 **AL KHOR STADIUM, AL KHOR** (45,330)

3 **LUSAIL ICONIC STADIUM, LUSAIL** (86,250)

4 **AL SHAMAL STADIUM, ASH SHAMAL** (45,120)

5 **UMM SALAL STADIUM, UMM SALAL** (45,120)

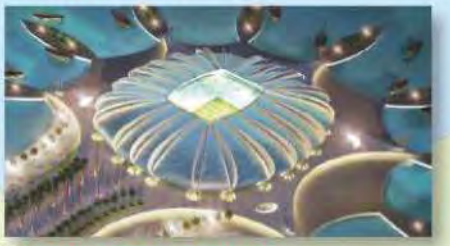
6 **AHMED BIN ALI STADIUM, AL RAYYAN** (44,740)

7 **KHALIFA INTERNATIONAL STADIUM, DOHA** (68,030)

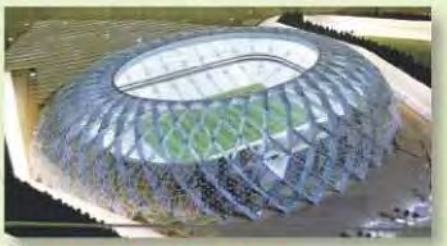
9 **EDUCATION CITY STADIUM, DOHA** (45,350)

8 **SPORTS CITY STADIUM, DOHA** (47,560)

10 **AL GHARAFA STADIUM, DOHA** (44,740)



11 **DOHA PORT STADIUM, DOHA** (44,950)



12 **AL WAKRAH STADIUM, AL WAKRAH** (45,120)

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Five-star Barcelona

The champions' 5-0 thrashing of Real Madrid was the heaviest defeat of Jose Mourinho's career

IT WAS BILLED as the biggest club match in history: Barcelona versus Real Madrid – two teams boasting 13 world champions between them and the last two winners of the World Player of the Year award, as well as the three favourites to win the prize this year. Two teams boasting the world's best players, Cristiano Ronaldo and Leo Messi, plus Pep Guardiola and Jose Mourinho, the men who have won trebles in the last two years. Never before had a club match brought together so much talent.

And, for once, it lived up to its billing. On one side, at least.

While Barcelona were sublime, Madrid, as one columnist complained, were "ridiculous".

Barcelona tore Real apart. Mourinho had insisted before the match that the *clasico* would not decide the league title, announcing that "Tuesday would still be Tuesday". After three months unbeaten, the best start a debutant coach had ever enjoyed in La Liga, he also insisted that his side would lose at some point. He might even have suspected that point might be against Barcelona, but he wouldn't have expected to lose quite like his team did. The word he used after the game was "historic".

Mourinho admitted that he had felt "impotent" as Barcelona beat his team. Goals from Xavi and Pedro – the latter after a 58-second, 20-pass move – gave Barcelona a 2-0 lead by half-time. Two more early goals in the second half from David Villa made it 4-0. And then, with Barcelona content to maintain possession amid the gloating and the *oles*, Jeffren added the fifth late on.

Five gave the score a special symbolism: Barcelona had, for the fifth time, beaten Madrid 5-0. By winning 5-0 they completed what is known in Spain as a *manita* – a little hand, ie a goal for every finger. The last two were epoch-defining results led by Johan Cruyff: once as a player in 1974 and once as coach of the legendary Dream Team in 1994.

Madrid had barely got near the ball, still less touched it. In the end, the frustration boiled over when Sergio Ramos hacked wildly at Messi's legs. It was the only way to stop him. For the first time in 10 games the Argentinian had not scored, but he had run the game. Alongside him Sergio Busquets, Andres Iniesta and Xavi left Madrid forever arriving a fraction too late, like a man sprinting into the station only to see his train pull away, dashing up to Barcelona's players just as the ball was moved on. Xavi completed an astonishing 114 of 119 passes. Barcelona accounted for almost 70 per cent of possession.

When Guardiola arrived in the dressing room, he sat his players down and quietly said: "Be humble." But, he added, with a proud smile on his face: "What you have just done was ******* spectacular."

No one could find a flaw in his argument. Or in his team's play. So complete was the victory that even the partisan Madrid press could not complain. Not at first, anyway. Having recovered their composure they began to whinge about referee Iturralde Gonzalez and a possible penalty for Ronaldo. The official had allowed

Too late again...Xabi Alonso can't prevent Lionel Messi from shooting during Barcelona's 5-0 trouncing of Real Madrid at Camp Nou

Villa's goal to make it 3-0 to stand even though their picture "proved" it was offside. It was typical, they said, the last three *clasico*s Iturralde has taken charge of have ended with an aggregate score of Barcelona 11 Real Madrid 0.

That very argument showed the paucity of their complaints – and their picture, not taken as the pass was delivered, proved nothing of the sort. As so often, they saw coincidence as causation. After all, in the last five *clasico*s since Guardiola has been Barcelona coach – only one of which Iturralde refereed – Barca have won all five with an aggregate score of 16-2. In his last three *clasico*s Iturralde had simply been the man with the whistle, watching as Barcelona shone.

This time they shone more than ever. Eighteen months ago Barcelona's 6-2 win over Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu was heralded as one of the greatest victories of all time. Such was the control, precision and pace in the passing, the sheer technical brilliance, that this 5-0 win has been widely hailed as even better. Many were declaring Guardiola's Barcelona the best side in the club's history – and it is not a wild claim, either.

Charly Rexach – the former player, coach and technical director, a Cruyff-ist ideologue at the club and the man to whom Guardiola dedicated his victory – called this the finest performance ever. Given the way that Barcelona had deflowered their opponents, picking them apart artfully rather than blowing them away, given the mind-blowing control they exercised, it was hard to disagree. Given that their opponents were no mugs but the most expensive team ever assembled, it was harder yet.

The week before, Barcelona had destroyed Almeria 8-0. Afterwards, Cristiano Ronaldo scoffed: "Yeah, I'd like to see them get eight against us." Had they not taken their foot off the pedal they might have done so. Midway through the second half, the Almeria player Henok Goitom tweeted: "Madrid, I know how you feel, believe me. You just want it to end." Madrid were being treated like Almeria; they were being toyed with.

> **"Madrid, I know just how you feel. You just want it to end"**
>
> *Almeria's Henok Goitom, whose team were thrashed 8-0 by Barcelona the previous week, tweets his sympathy*

Meanwhile, a giant leap was being taken towards the title. Before the match Iker Casillas had declared: "This game could be decisive." In relevant games against the rest of La Liga's clubs, Madrid and Barcelona had lost only six of their last 132 matches. As Guardiola put it last year, the amount of points that Madrid and Barcelona racked up was "barbaric". This season, he said, the total would once again have to be "indecent". No wonder the *clasico* looked so vital.

Afterwards, the narrative changed. Mourinho's insistence that the *clasico*

would decide nothing held sway. Madrid's players left Camp Nou without a word to the media. Mourinho, though, did talk and was humble, quiet and accepting, saying: "This isn't hard to swallow because we deserved it." Yet he was quick to remind people that, even though he lost twice with Internazionale at Camp Nou last season, his side still put Barcelona out of the Champions League at the semi-final stage. "We played the Final," he said. "They watched it on television."

In other words, Madrid could still win the league. And, with 24 games left, indeed they can.

The day after the *clasico*, the Madrid press had another story to get their teeth into, helping them to forget the defeat. It was confirmed that Mourinho would be handed a two-match ban (the second suspended) for ordering Sergio Ramos and Xabi Alonso to deliberately seek out red cards in their previous Champions League match against Ajax in Amsterdam so that the slate would be wiped clean for the knockout stages. There would be fines too – not just for Mourinho, but also for the club, and for Alonso, Ramos and messengers Casillas and Jerzy Dudek.

"It's not a punishment," Mourinho said. "It is a medal. My grandmother always said that if people are jealous of you, it is a good sign. Be happy. That is happening to me and I am pleased. There is one rule for me and one rule for every other coach."

Mourinho's ban was later reduced to one game on appeal, as was the club's fine.

The Madrid newspaper *Marca*, grateful for something else to splash across its cover other than the *clasico*, attacked UEFA for being "unjust and money-grabbing" – and much the same sentiment was echoed two days later about FIFA when Russia were handed the 2018 World Cup.

Spain/Portugal were convinced that they would gain at least nine votes in the first round and then collect votes that other candidacies lost as they were eliminated. Instead, they got just seven – and never added to that total in the second round.

"When England were eliminated in the first round I thought, 'something funny is going on here,'" admitted the president of the Spanish football federation, Angel Maria Villar.

It was widely assumed by the Spanish public and the media that their bid was the "best", even though no one seemed to have actually read any of the other bids. Villar had the support of Latin America, Qatar and, he thought, one or two votes in Africa and Europe.

Even his frankly surreal harangue during the Iberian presentation did not dampen spirits, not least because for all that he went over his allotted time, wagged his finger, slurred his words and looked like a man possessed, it was the only speech to draw applause from the FIFA ExCo members.

"I knew what they wanted to hear," Villar said of the speech in which he declared FIFA to be "clean, no matter what those slanderous people say".

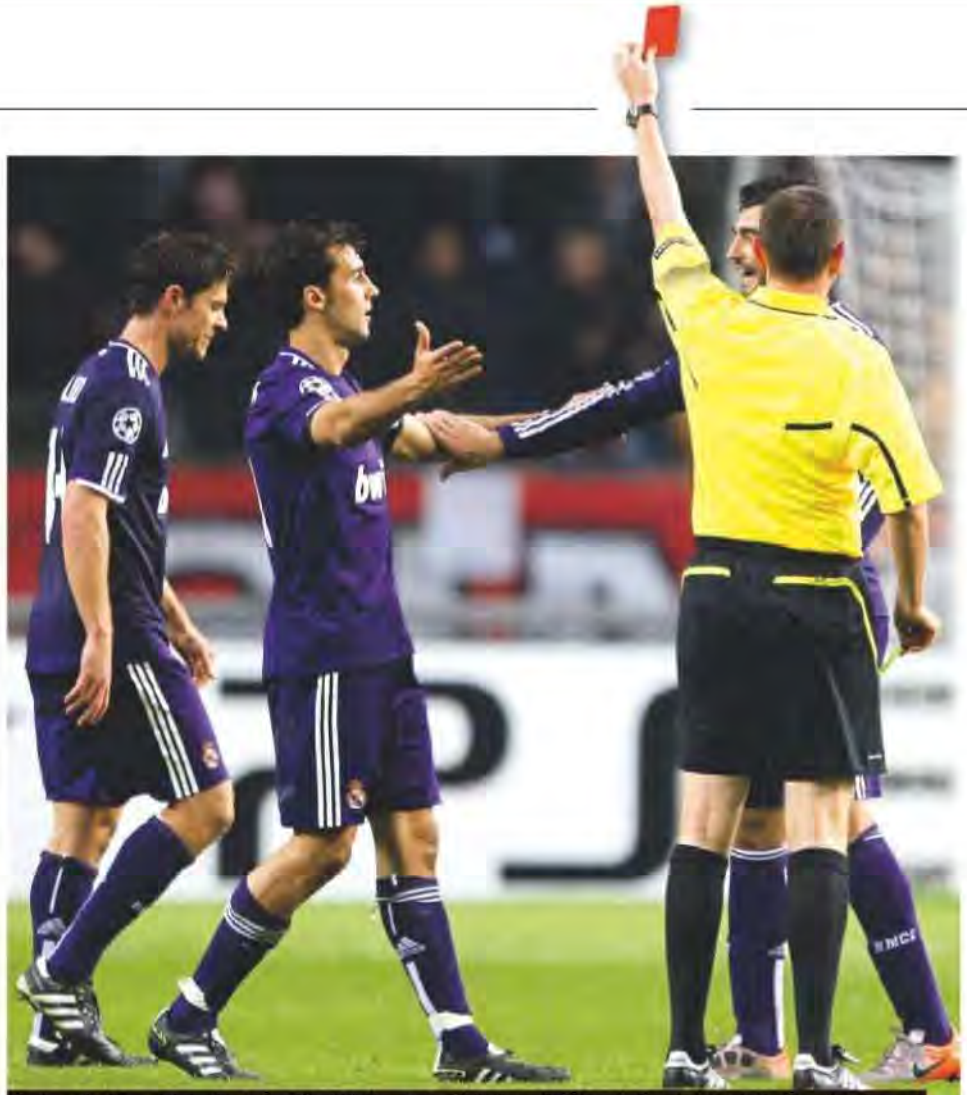
As one commentator said: "It's a good job that the World Cup is not awarded on the strength of that speech." But soon everyone suspected they knew what it was awarded for. The Spanish could hardly disagree more with what their president had said. Clean was not a word they would use for FIFA.

The decision was greeted with indignation and contempt, and even as the announcement was being made, Ramon Trecet on Radio Marca was cackling like a madman at the "crooked" inevitability and injustice of it all. "We're so dumb, so stupid," he said. "Why are we still listening to this? We know perfectly well what has happened."

When Qatar's name followed that of Russia, it served merely as confirmation that Iberia's bid could not compete with Russian petrol-dollars.

Jaime Lissavetzky, the Spanish minister for sport who tasted disappointment when Madrid lost out on the Olympic Games, simply shrugged and said: "I am getting used to losing." ●

Jonathan Wilson on the clasico, page 56



Seeing red...Alvaro Arbeloa (centre) and Raul Albiol protest as Xabi Alonso (left) is sent off against Ajax in the Champions League

"It's not a punishment, it's a medal"

Jose Mourinho on his ban over Real Madrid's red-card controversy

We've lost...a Madrid bar sees the 2018 World Cup go to Russia

Wrong target

Equatorial Guinea are alleged to have fielded a male player in the African Women's Championship, but the real scandal is their use of foreign mercenaries

AFRICA

MARK GLEESON in Cape Town

QUALIFYING FOR the Women's World Cup is an extraordinary feat for a country the size of Equatorial Guinea, which is among the smallest in Africa, with a population of less than one million and with no footballing pedigree until recently.

That change of fortune coincided with a sudden oil boom that means a desperately poor country now commands the resources to buy success. And that is exactly what they have done, by assembling a team of mercenaries to qualify for their first FIFA competition.

Their qualification as runners-up to Nigeria in the African Women's Championship in South Africa was mired in controversy over claims that their top striker was a man. However, the real cheating is not a gender issue but rather one of nationality.

It is true that Simpore Salimata has strong male features but other elements of her game marked her out distinctly as female and hers seems a sad case of excessive male testosterone.

But what is scandalous is that she is a former Burkina Faso international who has been allowed to break convention and rules to play for Equatorial Guinea without any sanction.

Indeed, the side that beat South Africa 3-1 after extra time in the semi-final to secure a trip to the World Cup in Germany in June featured only three players with a genuine claim to play for the country. The rest were Brazilian, Burkinabe, Cameroonian, Nigerian and Senegalese – all paid to play for Equatorial Guinea and given passports, and in return helping to elevate the country almost instantly into World Cup qualifiers.

FIFA rules of naturalisation require residency of three years but, without any women's league to speak of in Equatorial Guinea, the majority of the national side are imported for matches then flown back to their country of origin. "We have players from around the world," admitted coach Jean-Paul Mpila before ducking further questions.

> **"We have players from all around the world"**
>
> *Women's national coach Jean-Paul Mpila admits the recruitment policy*

FIFA may want to investigate how the likes of Carolina Conceicao Pereira, who plays in Germany, or goalkeeper Miriam Silva da Paixao came to be capped by a small African country with whom they have no obvious connection. Silva is from Sao Francisco do Conde in Brazil and her brilliance proved the catalyst for Equatorial Guinea's success in South Africa.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) showed no interest in investigating whether these foreign-born players were entitled to play for Equatorial Guinea and allowed them to qualify for the Women's World Cup at the expense of more worthy opponents. This, patently, is because Equatorial Guinea are co-hosts (with Gabon) of the next men's African Nations Cup finals, in 2012, and CAF is keen not to upset any sensibilities as it depends on government financing to ensure the tournament's success.

Equatorial Guinea's men have been cheating since 2005, when their Brazilian coach Antonio Dumas imported players from his homeland to bolster the *Nzalang Nacional* (national lightning), as Equatorial Guinea are nicknamed. Some of the seven mercenaries still play despite having never spent more than a few weeks at a time there.

Now Equatorial Guinea are buying more reinforcements as they prepare for the 2012 Nations Cup finals. Recent additions include former Bordeaux junior Mamadou Balde, who plays for Langon-Castets in the lower leagues in France, Nigerian striker Kelvin Onosiughe, recruited to the cause while playing at Santa Comba in Spain, and Seth Appiah, a former Ghana Under-20 squad member.

Lowly profile

Equatorial Guinea's lowly profile means they can get away with all this and not attract any indignation from FIFA. However, it was a lot different in 2004 when Qatar sought to buy the services of Brazil-born Bundesliga star Ailton, whose own country never selected him but who the oil-rich Arabs sought for their national team. Sepp Blatter was forced to step in at the time to stop the charade and set down eligibility rules, including "a clear connection to the country".

Despite this, Equatorial Guinea's men and women continue to flout them unhindered – so much so that the women are off to the World Cup. ●

Eligibility issues...Salimata (right) in action for Equatorial Guinea against Nigeria in the African Women's Championship Final

Billion-dollar ambition

The successful 2022 World Cup bid was the culmination of a decade-long plan to establish the Gulf state as major player on the world stage

QATAR

MICHAEL CHURCH in Doha

OVER THE LAST 10 years the skyline running along Doha's Corniche – where many fans will no doubt attempt to brave the energy-sapping heat and humidity of a Gulf summer during the World Cup in 2022 – has become unrecognisable.

Not so long ago the pyramid-shaped outline of the Sheraton Hotel dominated the shoreline, but what was once the city's most famous landmark now nestles unobtrusively in the background.

Around it has sprung a plethora of gleaming skyscrapers; a multitude of glass-and-steel fingers pointing into the sky, reaching for the stars in much the same way as Qatar's ambitions over the last decade have aimed into the stratosphere.

For a state the size of Qatar to even contemplate bidding for an event such as the World Cup required a suspension of belief, but winning the rights perhaps marks it as the most astonishing feat of all time in world sporting politics.

A nation of just 1.6 million, which is home to a national team that has never qualified for the World Cup finals and has only once progressed beyond the group stages of its own continental championship, will welcome the world to its shores.

The success marks Qatar's amazing oil- and natural-gas-fuelled rise on the world stage. It has been transformed from a musty, slightly dated and inferior neighbour of brash Dubai into the glittering jewel at the heart of the Gulf.

Sport, and a strong regional rivalry, has lain at the centre of the nation's attempts to transform itself into a global power. As the Qataris saw Dubai and then Abu Dhabi establish themselves prominently on the world stage, so the peninsular state decided to indulge in a game of one-upmanship.

The establishment of the billion-dollar Aspire Academy has made sporting excellence its goal as some of the finest coaches trawl the planet for young talent with which to populate the state-of-the-art gyms, swimming pools and other facilities.

Aggressive attempts have been made to secure the hosting rights to as many major sporting events as possible. Qatar hosted the 2006 Asian Games, athletics' 2010 world indoor championships and 2011's Asian Cup. It is also a major player on the women's professional tennis tour.

An ambitious bid to secure the 2016 Olympic Games fell by the wayside but, unperturbed, the country's royal family – led by the Emir of Qatar himself, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and his son, Sheikh Mohammed – set their eyes on the greatest prize of all: the World Cup.

Little pedigree

With very little pedigree at the upper levels of the game – Qatar came closest to qualifying for the World Cup in 1998 when a 1-0 defeat by Saudi Arabia deprived them of the chance to play in France – the odds were always going to be stacked against them.

But with limitless financial reserves, allied to an all-powerful royal family whose decree is final, all that was required to deliver a plausible bid was the will to do so.

Such is the confidence of the Qataris that not even the elements can limit their ambitions. Temperatures may hit 50 degrees in the height of summer but the solution, they claim, can be found in air-conditioned stadiums and the outside-the-box thinking that was the hallmark of their bid.

However, Qatar needed one thing more than anything else to have any serious hopes of winning the bid: political influence. And the ace up its sleeve was Mohamed Bin Hammam.

Bin Hammam's links within the game's decision-making body are strong and it was with his support – and that of the Emir, who loaned him the use of one of his private 747s – that Sepp Blatter secured the FIFA presidency in 1998.

Bin Hammam has since seen his own political aspirations bear fruit and, off the back of those, has come his – and his country's – greatest coup to date.

> **"Qatar needed one thing more than anything else to have serious hopes of winning the bid: political influence. And the ace up its sleeve was Mohamed Bin Hammam"**

Since becoming president of the Asian Football Confederation in mid-2002, the Qatari businessman has had an eye on a much grander role and, throughout the early years of his AFC presidency, Bin Hammam has worked behind the scenes to garner support for his impending bid to become president of FIFA.

When the Qatari royal family decided the nation would use sport as the vehicle through which it would elevate its status on the global stage, they had a ready-made ambassador for their plans in Bin Hammam and, thanks to his influence, they were starting far beyond zero.

Bin Hammam was encouraged to shelve his desire to battle Blatter – the two have become estranged in recent years – for football's top job and use his political influence instead to encourage as many members of FIFA's executive committee as possible to support Qatar's candidature.

With Bin Hammam's clout and an already cast-iron relationship between the Emir and Blatter, the support of the FIFA president was also secured with the Swiss hailing the Qatari bid on a visit to the state in April to attend the Crown Prince Cup Final.

Thus the pieces were in place for Qatar to pip the United States to the 2022 World Cup hosting rights. And, with the Asian Cup due to kick off on January 7, the country now has an early opportunity to showcase its ability to host major events.

To be held in five venues – with the Final in the impressive Khalifa International Stadium – the manner in which Qatar hosts the 16-team event will have very little bearing or indication on the job that will be done in 2022. Aside, that is, from one consideration.

When the AFC awarded the Asian Cup rights to Qatar, in 2007, there was a stipulation that it be played in the cooler, winter months. It is a move FIFA would do well to consider, despite all the talk of revolutionary air-conditioning technology. ●

Asian Cup preview, page 90

Flying the flag...jubilant Qataris display a picture of the Emir with the World Cup as they celebrate the nation's successful 2022 bid

World Cup dreams

Central American minnows warm up with regional competition

GUATEMALA

REX GOWAR

FOR THE seven countries that make up the Central American Football Union, all thoughts are on Brazil and the World Cup finals being hosted by their South American neighbour in 2014. However, the first big test for these sides is the Central American Cup – formerly known as the UNCAF Nations Cup – being held in Panama in January.

Costa Rica have won the tournament – which doubles as a qualifying competition for the CONCACAF Gold Cup with five places up for grabs – a record six times, while Honduras have triumphed twice, with Guatemala and Panama winning once each. The other countries taking part are El Salvador, who have played at two World Cup finals before, and minnows Nicaragua and Belize.

Costa Rica, who lost on penalties to Panama in the 2009 Final, have made more World Cup appearances than any other Central American team and are now led by Argentinian coach Ricardo La Volpe, who steered Mexico to the second round at Germany 2006.

Like La Volpe, Uruguay-born Ever Almeida is a former goalkeeper who has worked extensively outside the country of his birth, and he is now in charge of Guatemala. But unlike the Costa Rica coach, who has a contract until July 2014, former Paraguay international Almeida will have his position reviewed well before the finals.

"Almeida has a verbal agreement with the Guatemalan federation for 18 months and if all is looking good at the end of that period he will continue until the World Cup," says the national team's Argentinian sporting manager, Sergio Torrado. "We have a bad FIFA ranking [they are currently 126th] and must correct that.

"In the last [World Cup] qualifiers we were eliminated for various reasons but we nearly made it in the previous ones. We lost our deciding match in Trinidad [& Tobago]."

Face-off...Guatemala's Cristian Noriega (right) battles with Rodolfo Zelaya of El Salvador in a friendly in the USA

On trial...Guatemala coach Ever Almeida

Guatemala, whose best-ever FIFA ranking was 50th in August 2006, have never reached a World Cup, but Torrado believes that will change one day, saying: "At some point, if we do things right, we'll go. We need to achieve a higher standard in local tournaments."

The 1960s were relatively good for Guatemala at regional and Olympic level. They won the CONCACAF Cup once, were runners-up twice between 1965 and 1969, and reached the Olympic quarter-finals in Mexico in 1968 before losing 1-0 to eventual champions Hungary.

Lack of organisation

Juan Ramon Veron, the former Estudiantes winger and father of Argentina World Cup midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron, says the problem he found during his time as a coach in Guatemala in the late 1990s was a lack of organisation at international level.

"There are differences among directors and a lot of improvisation," says Veron. "They need to work more on their juniors."

Veron, like Torrado, also believes that Guatemala lag behind Honduras because their neighbours have a greater number of skilled and more athletic players, particularly the black players from the Caribbean coast.

"Honduras perhaps has more individual talents," says Veron. "Guatemalan players stand out for technique rather than strength. They don't have the same physical potential."

Honduras, who represented Central America at the 2010 World Cup, are no longer looked after by Colombian coach Reinaldo Rueda, who has moved on to Ecuador. His place has been taken by Mexico's Juan De Dios Castillo, who has worked almost uninterruptedly in Honduras since 2003 and coached all four of the country's big clubs.

Meanwhile, Central American Cup hosts Panama also have a new coach in Julio Cesar Dely Valdes, who was the national team's interim boss in 2006.

Having been given the job full time, he will now be looking to much-travelled 28-year-old striker Luis Tejada, who plays for Juan Aurich in Peru and was voted the most valuable player at the 2005 Gold Cup, to help the country retain the Central American Cup on home soil and then gear up for a first World Cup appearance. ●

London calling

The capital's leading clubs are closing in on a Wembley date in May

ENGLAND

GAVIN HAMILTON in London

LONDON CAN rightly claim to have been the capital of European football this autumn as it became the first city ever to have three teams in the knockout stage of the Champions League – with Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur all chasing the prize of a place in the Final at Wembley on May 28.

With Manchester United's comfortable qualification for the last 16, England is the only country with four teams involved in the business end of the competition. And that is despite the changes introduced by UEFA president Michel Platini to open up the Champions League to clubs from less wealthy nations.

Platini's advisors will no doubt be delighted at the presence of Copenhagen and Shakhtar Donetsk in the knockout stage; his detractors, meanwhile, can point to the remaining 14 places being taken by teams from the traditional powers of England (four), France (two), Germany (two), Italy (three) and Spain (three).

Platini's changes to the qualifying rounds excluded the likes of Sevilla and Sampdoria – beaten by Braga and Werder Bremen respectively – and shoehorned lesser lights such as Zilina and Partizan Belgrade into the group stage. However, the imbalance of power succeeded only in confirming the predictability of the group format as 13 of the 16 top-seeded teams reached the first knockout round. The exceptions were Copenhagen, Schalke and Tottenham.

The final matchday produced an exceptionally high number of dead rubbers, with only Copenhagen, Roma and Arsenal having to wait until the last game to confirm their passage to the knockout stages. Zilina and Partizan, on the other hand, failed to register a single point from their group encounters.

Most of the excitement was restricted to meetings between the top two teams in each group – notably Roma's stirring comeback from 2-0 down at half-time to beat Bayern Munich 3-2. The exception was Group A, where debutants Tottenham showed no inhibitions, scoring 18 goals to push European champions Internazionale into second place.

> **That's the way we play – we don't know any other way**
>
> *Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp*

Foot off the gas

The only side to match Spurs' goal tally were Arsenal, who turned on the style at home to Braga (6-0) and Shakhtar (5-1), but then took their foot off the gas in the returns, losing in both Portugal and Ukraine.

Similarly, Chelsea found life easy in their group, winning five on the trot before defeat at Marseille in their final group game. Their early season form suggested that Carlo Ancelotti had cultivated a happy, contented squad at Stamford Bridge, but injuries to key players such as Frank Lampard and John Terry, and a deteriorating relationship between the manager and the club's owner, Roman Abramovich, threatened to derail Chelsea's season. The sacking of assistant manager Ray Wilkins coincided with the beginning of the club's worst run of results since the Russian bought the club.

Tottenham fans enjoyed their first tastes of Champions League action, but whether the team can maintain their form in the more disciplined environment of the knockout stage remains to be seen.

"That's the way we play," said manager Harry Redknapp in reference to his team's free-scoring approach – which also saw them concede 11 goals. "We don't know any other way."

However, Barcelona remain the team to avoid in the last 16. Lionel Messi put his disappointing World Cup with Argentina behind him to shine for his club in what was, admittedly, an easy group. His six goals included some gems, while the blooding of several kids from the Barca B team in the final group game against Rubin suggested their is plenty more talent ready to break through from La Masia, the club's renowned academy.

Stale Solbakken's Copenhagen sprung one of the few surprises by finishing runners-up to Barcelona in Group D and thus became the first Danish club ever to reach the last 16.

A final word, too, for Manchester United, for whom Wayne Rooney failed to spark. Though they managed only seven goals in six group matches, they conceded just one – an encouraging portent for Alex Ferguson, who would love nothing more than to crash the London party in May. ●

Goal crazy...Tottenham celebrate as Peter Crouch (out of picture) scores during the 3-0 win over Werder Bremen

Bayern's autumn woe

The Bundesliga champions are out of title contention after a poor first half of the season

GERMANY

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

DESPITE THEIR long-held status as the ruling class of the Bundesliga, once or twice a decade Bayern Munich's breeding, connections and bank balance are not enough to keep them ahead of the game. And this season is turning out to be one of those role-reversal campaigns; a season in which the reigning champions seem to have swopped their sceptre and regal robes for a grubby pair of overalls.

Defensively sloppy and rarely able to turn long periods of possession into goals, Bayern began December in seventh place, a massive 17 points in arrears of leaders Borussia Dortmund. No team in Bundesliga history has ever come from so far back to scoop the title and, realistically, the best Bayern can now hope for is direct Champions League qualification via the runners-up spot.

But it will not be easy to relight the victorious flame. The house speciality is for poor results to lead instantly to acrimony and the club's power-brokers have already engaged in a potentially destabilising exchange of fire with Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal.

As prickly and uncompromising as ever, Van Gaal was foaming at the mouth when president Uli Hoeness appeared on TV to pick holes in his man-management and team selections. In addition, chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge found himself similarly admonished for daring to suggest that some of the reserves be picked for a Champions League tie away to Roma, while the future of the in-demand Bastian Schweinsteiger sheds further light on the fault lines in high places.

The boardroom view is that Schweinsteiger must either prolong his current deal, which runs out in the summer of 2012, or be forced to stay for another season. But Van Gaal thinks otherwise, arguing that if "Schweini" cannot be persuaded to make a long-term commitment, Bayern should accept the £30million which Real Madrid, Manchester United, Chelsea or Internazionale are reportedly ready to offer. "Football is a business and my clubs have always made a lot of money," declared Van Gaal. "I don't believe any player is worth such a sum."

However, general manager Christian Nerlinger retorted: "Van Gaal is not here to make us rich. We're looking for him to bring us more success and for that we need players like Schweinsteiger." No need to dig deep for the subtext here. The message from board to coach is: "You do your job, we'll do ours."

Feeling the strain

Nor are the notes of discord confined to the suits – the players are feeling the strain too – and those who make a living out of the "FC Hollywood" shtick have had plenty of meat and drink, not least the training ground row involving midfielders Mark Van Bommel and Anatoliy Tymoshchuk, the constant whining of Argentinian centre-back Martin Demichelis about his lack of starts and the latest *cri de coeur* of star creator Franck Ribery who, after being publicly lambasted by his boss for his efforts in a practice match, complained he did not have sufficient dialogue with the coach – a polite way of saying they do not get on.

Ribery, who returned to the team in November after two months nursing torn ankle ligaments, was happy last summer to put pen to paper on a lucrative four-year contract extension which doubled his annual salary to £8.5m and made him the best-paid Bundesliga player of all time. Yet the French maverick must now wonder if he made the right decision.

While he has grown to love Bayern and the city of Munich, and has made impressive progress in his spoken German, Ribery only responds to an arm around the shoulder and is ill at ease with the austere, plain-speaking Van Gaal.

Not that Bayern are the only big club with a distinct whiff of crisis in the air. Werder Bremen, champions in 2003-04 and almost permanently ensconced in the top three in recent years, have spent the autumn falling apart, cutting an abject figure in their Champions League group and going from setback to setback on the domestic front – so much so that even some of their most fervent supporters fear they could be dragged into a relegation fight.

> **"Van Gaal is not here to make us rich. We're looking for him to bring us more success"**
>
> *Bayern general manager Christian Nerlinger reminds the coach where his priorities should lie*

In mitigation, the northerners have had some appalling luck this season. The sale in August of brilliant Germany playmaker Mesut Ozil left a void which simply could not be filled, while injuries to a host of key men – Brazil centre-back Naldo, all-purpose midfielder Tim Borowski and goal machine Claudio Pizarro – have only added to the state of emergency.

The revulsion the Bremen movers and shakers have for knee-jerk reactions and the continuity they make a point of promoting at every turn means that long-serving coach Thomas Schaaf remains unlikely to be sacked. Yet, in more than 11 years in charge, he has never looked so short of answers. Tactically he has been fumbling in the dark and there can be no excuse for the team's total lack of defensive organisation this season.

Reinforcements in January could help, but doubts persist that general manager Klaus Allofs can find the necessary quality. The new boys he brought in last summer – ex-Arsenal defender Mickael Silvestre and Austrian wild-child attacker Marko Arnautovic – have been disappointing, to say the least, and the feeling in some quarters is that Allofs is not the shrewd transfer-market operator he once was.

Relegated only once, in 1979-80, Werder should be able to steer clear of another demotion, but clearly they must rethink and rebuild. ●

Struggling...Eintracht Frankfurt's Patrick Ochs (left) beats Silvestre of Bremen

worldmags

Feeling the heat...Ribery

worldmags

Referees strike back

SPL officials take action over fears for their safety following a storm of criticism

SCOTLAND

DAN BRENNAN in Glasgow

IT HAS BEEN a winter of discontent in Scottish football, marked by rancour, scandal and farce. And in a country where suspicions of sectarian bias are never far from the surface, controversial refereeing decisions often provoke more heat than elsewhere.

A series of incidents culminated in the nation's referees downing tools for two days, throwing the fixture schedule on the last weekend of November into chaos. In another damaging episode, the SFA's head of referee development, Hugh Dallas – formerly Scotland's most prominent match official – was sacked, along with five other officials, after he disseminated an email making reference to the Pope and paedophilia.

The touchpaper on the pitch was ignited when Dundee United hosted Celtic on October 17. Referee Dougie McDonald awarded Celtic a penalty and then – correctly as TV replays showed – reversed his decision. But after the match, he told Celtic manager Neil Lennon that his U-turn had been influenced by assistant referee Steven Craven when it had, in fact, been his own decision.

McDonald later received an official warning from the SFA, while Craven resigned soon after, citing "harassment and bullying" from his employers. Celtic chairman John Reid later increased the tensions, calling on McDonald to resign and demanding a complete overhaul of the SFA, muttering darkly of "stories of lies, conspiracies and cover-ups". Scottish MP Pete Wilson further stoked the flames by calling on referees to make public which teams they support.

Further discord followed during Celtic's 3-1 defeat by Rangers in the Old Firm derby a week later when Lennon questioned referee Willie Collum's award of a penalty to Rangers and his general handling of the game.

"I feel let down on the penalty incident for sure," said Lennon. "I'm not sure [Collum] saw it and I'm not sure why he has given it. He has got a lot of questions to answer."

Foreign aid...Luxembourg referee Alain Hamer (centre) and his assistants prepare to take charge of Celtic's game against Inverness

> "Celtic chairman John Reid called on referee McDonald to resign, muttering darkly about 'lies, conspiracies and cover-ups'"

That night Collum – who is a religious education teacher at a Roman Catholic school – received a series of threatening calls at his home.

Then, on November 10, when Celtic lost 2-0 to Hearts, Lennon was once more at loggerheads with the referee, accusing Craig Thomson of several "scandalous" decisions.

Virtual picket line

Eleven days after Lennon made his "scandalous" comment, 31 of the country's 33 category one match officials voted to strike on November 27 and 28, citing fears for their safety, both on and off the pitch. In a frantic bid to ensure matches went ahead, the SFA issued an SOS to associations around Europe. Officials from Iceland, Norway and Wales refused to cross the virtual picket line, but Portugal, Malta, Poland, Israel and Luxembourg agreed to send help. With two days to go, the SFA confirmed that a full SPL programme would take place.

However, a day after agreeing to send four sets of officials, the Polish FA backtracked, claiming their men were needed for domestic matches – which they were not. It appeared they had understood their officials were wanted as part of an exchange and not in order to cover for striking colleagues.

The Portuguese then did an even more dramatic volte-face, referees Cosme Machado and Joao Ferreira heading home as soon as they touched down at Glasgow Airport after finding out the reason for their summons.

In the end, the Hibernian v St Johnstone and Motherwell v Hearts games were given to Maltese referees, Hamilton v St Mirren was officiated by Israeli officials, and Celtic's fixture against Inverness was handed to a trio from Luxembourg. The latter were also due to take charge of Rangers' match the following day, but that was called off because of a frozen pitch.

For once, extreme weather was the least of Scottish football's winter woes. ●

Rescue package

Investors step in to save the country's oldest club

SWITZERLAND

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Berne

ST GALLEN, Switzerland's oldest club, escaped bankruptcy by the skin of their teeth after a group of local businessmen stepped in with a last-minute cash injection of £6.5million to stop the 131-year-old institution emulating Servette and Lausanne-Sport.

Led by Dolf Fruh, six individuals donated between £0.7m and £1.7m each, while a consortium of banks agreed to write off debts totalling £3m.

"We are now in a position where we can look to the future," says Fruh, who was appointed club president at the annual general meeting. "We believe we have a sustainable solution, but we are also aware that we have not yet reached our goal."

The club's undoing was the building of a new stadium, the AFG Arena, at a cost of £225m. The stadium was opened in 2008, but just as St Gallen were about to move in they were relegated to the second division. Although they bounced back at the first attempt, the damage had been done. The club had badly overestimated the amount of revenue they could pull in from the VIP boxes and business functions, and were quickly dragged into the red. With attendances averaging well below their new home's 20,000 capacity, and Switzerland preferring to stage internationals in Basle, it quickly became unsustainable.

The club and the stadium have now been split into separate concerns and the latter still needs to find a further £3.25m to pay off its debts. It was hoping local authorities would help out, but the canton of St Gallen voted against dipping into public funds. There was some help when the city government agreed to reduce the bill for policing home games, though the club were indignant at being told they, in return, would need permission for the police before matches could be staged.

St Gallen were founded in 1879, making them one of Europe's oldest clubs, though it was 13 years before they played a game against another team from another part of Switzerland, losing 1-0 to Grasshopper from Zurich – who complained that the goals were too small.

Saviour...Fruh

St Gallen won the national championship in 1904 and since then they have become known as a dependable mid-table outfit, despite relegation on a couple of occasions. They won the Swiss Cup in 1969 and a young Ivan Zamorano played for them in the late 1980s before he moved on to Real Madrid and Internazionale, but they pulled off a major upset when they won the title for a second time in 1999-2000 with a team led by Ghana striker Charles Amoah.

However, it was that success that ultimately proved their undoing as they dismantled the team, raked in the cash and then decided to splash out on the new stadium – their last game at the old Espennmoos Stadium in 2008, which had served as their home for 98 years, proving doubly poignant it was there that defeat to Bellinzona sent them down.

Sound finances required

Swiss Football League (SFL) rules require all teams to be in a sound financial situation before they are allowed to play in the top flight. They are permitted to have debts, but must have a backer to cover these. In the past, Servette and Lausanne-Sport have been thrown out of the top flight after going bankrupt.

The most high-profile case involved Geneva-based club Servette. National champion 17 times, they were declared bankrupt in February 2005 with debts of £6.5million and had not paid their players for several months. An under-21 team of the same name continued to play on in the third division and Servette are now once again a professional team, playing in the second-tier Challenge League.

Two years previously Lausanne-Sport, a club who have won the Swiss title seven times, were relegated in very similar circumstances and they too are now in the Challenge League – and rather bizarrely also played in this season's Europa League group stage after finishing as runners-up to Basle, who qualified for the Champions League, in the 2010 Swiss Cup.

Grasshopper, one of the country's most successful clubs, also diced with expulsion last season but they were saved by a late cash injection and the sale of 18-year-old Nassim Ben Khalifa to Wolfsburg, where he has since found himself surplus to requirements.

One of Switzerland's finest prospects, Ben Khalifa, who helped the national junior side win the World Under-17 Championship in 2009, now plays in the German fourth division with Wolfsburg's reserve team. ●

Nice ground, no fans...a home game for St Gallen at the AFG Arena

Ultra attention

Racist fans in the spotlight at *Azzurri* friendly in Austria

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

A YEAR IN WHICH little seemed to go right for Italian football ended on a miserable note in mid-November when the national team drew 1-1 with Romania in a friendly in Klagenfurt, Austria. The significance of this game, for once, was not the result but rather that it was marked by ugly, racist behaviour from a handful of supporters.

Given all its many problems – outdated stadia, poor quality pitches, insolvent clubs, recurrent doping incidents, not to mention occasional bouts of betting-linked match fixing – the last thing the game in Italy needed was the emergence of a small core of racist fans willing to follow Italy to away matches.

Yet, this particular grouping is nothing new. Two years ago, on the occasion of a World Cup qualifier against Bulgaria, they were involved in scuffles in downtown Sofia before singing Fascist songs and shouting "Duce, Duce" (in reference to Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini) as they walked to Sofia's Levski stadium. During the playing of the Bulgarian national anthem they amused themselves by whistling, making straight-arm Fascist salutes and burning the Bulgarian flag.

This time, the small number of "Ultra Italia" fans, many of them from just across the Italo-Austrian border, sought to enliven an otherwise eminently forgettable night with a series of insults directed primarily at Manchester City's black striker Mario Balotelli, but also at Lazio's Italo-Argentinian Cristiano Ledesma who was making his debut for Italy.

Among the less edifying concepts expressed was one suggesting that the Italian team should be "only for Italians", with the implication being that neither Ledesma or Balotelli were entitled to line up for Italy.

On a somewhat surreal night, the exploits of these fans – after the game Milan midfielder Andrea Pirlo suggested that they numbered less than 100 – were greatly amplified by the fact that the game was played in an almost empty Hypo Arena. The old WoertherseeStadion, which was used for the 2008 European Championship, holds around 32,000, but for this game it attracted the modest turnout of just 5,436 paying customers. You have to go back to the early days of the 20th century to find the last time such a small number of people watched an Italy international.

> "Here in Italy I see fans who are more stupid than racist"
>
> *Mario Balotelli*

Thanks to a contract with the sports rights marketing company, SportFive, the game was played in Klagenfurt rather than the more obvious, traditional venue of a provincial Italian town. Had the game been played at such a venue, it would doubtless have attracted huge home support from supporters who do not often get the chance to see the *Azzurri* at close quarters. If they had played the game somewhere like Bari, Pisa, Modena or wherever, the "Ultra Italia" mob would have been simply drowned out, overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of genuine football fans.

Racist insults

Balotelli has long become accustomed to the phenomenon of racist insults, having experienced it throughout much of his early career in Italy. After the Klagenfurt friendly, with a maturity that belies his 20 years of age, he commented: "Perhaps English fans are more sporting than Italian fans, thanks partly to tougher laws. But, here in Italy, I see fans who are more stupid than racist.

"The guy who is shouting insults at me is quite likely to come up and ask me for an autograph after the game."

If Balotelli feels glad to have left racist Italian fans far behind him, he might well be feeling pretty relieved that he also opted to leave the reigning European Champions Internazionale. When Inter lost their final Champions League group game, beaten 3-0 away to Werder Bremen, it rounded off a spectacularly poor run for the side now coached by Rafa Benitez. Not only was this Inter's second defeat in three Champions League games, but it also came on the back of a Serie A run that saw the Italian champions lose three, draw two and win just one of their previous six Serie A games.

Inter's failure to win a relatively easy Champions League group – Tottenham Hotspur and Twente were the other two teams – and their domestic struggles have already convinced some fans and commentators alike that the side which has dominated Italian football for the last four seasons is now in chronic, irreversible decline.

One of the strangest aspects of the Inter malaise is their never-ending injury crisis. When Dejan Stankovic limped off the pitch during the painful 3-1 away defeat by Lazio in early December he became the club's 42nd player to go on the injured list this season. When Inter lined up against Werder for that 3-0 defeat, the entire defence of Julio Cesar, Maicon, Walter Samuel, Lucio and Cristian Chivu was ruled out through injury, as were Stankovic in midfield, and Wesley Sneijder and Diego Milito in attack.

In others words, three-quarters of the side that Jose Mourinho led to the treble last season were not available and, instead, players such as Obiora Nwankwo, Cristiano Biraghi, MacDonald Mariga and Felice Natalino turned out against the German side. Yet the unusual Inter line-up hardly explained a lacklustre performance in a match that was not without significance. Even if Inter had already qualified for the knockout stage, the game was clearly still important because it could have seen them win their group and thus avoid a clash with the top seeds. Indeed, Twente's 3-3 draw with Spurs proved precisely that point.

Time will tell, but the suspicion remains that the current Inter crisis is more mental than physical and is the entirely logical fallout from the extraordinary intensity of last season.

Put another way, the "Special One" got everything that could be got out of this squad and it remains to be seen how long it will take them to recover. ●

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Focus...Balotelli was abused by his own supporters during the friendly against Romania in Austria

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Repeat performance

The future of Major League Soccer remains bright, despite poor TV coverage

USA

PAUL GARDNER in New York

THE 2010 MLS Cup Final (see Digest, page 99) had the lowest TV rating of the past 12 Finals and was down nearly 50 per cent on last year's figure. That is alarming for MLS, though a variety of reasons contributed to the slump – among them ESPN's distorted treatment of MLS and American soccer in general.

The man in charge of the network's soccer coverage is executive producer Jed Drake – a man of very limited soccer knowledge, but who is determined to model ESPN's broadcasts on what the Premier League does in England. To this end, ESPN's World Cup coverage featured an array of British announcers and analysts, with former USA midfielder John Harkes the only American on view.

Worse was to follow. For the MLS Cup Final, ESPN brought in two Brits, Ian Darke and Steve McManaman, and it quickly become painfully clear that neither knew very much about either of the teams or MLS. ESPN's view of American soccer – that it cannot stand on its own two feet and needs to put forward a British face whenever an important game comes around – is way out of date. There are now experienced and knowledgeable American commentators and ESPN's refusal to use them is a crude slap in the face for the American game.

Of course, football leagues never criticise the TV networks who air their games, so it was no surprise that none of ESPN's shortcomings featured in commissioner Don Garber's "state of the league" address which he delivered just before the Final. This was a largely upbeat analysis of the current situation – and the optimism is solidly based.

As an indicator of how MLS is faring, it is instructive to look back at the history of the league's predecessor, the old North American Soccer League (NASL). At the end of its15th year, the league was already on the skids. Two years earlier it had boasted 24 teams, but now it was down to 14 – and two more clubs would disappear before the 1983 season began. Just one more year after that was all there was left and the NASL folded in 1984.

Room for improvement...MLS crowds are growing but there were still empty seats at Kansas City Wizards v San Jose Earthquakes

> "For the MLS Cup Final, ESPN brought in two Brits and it quickly became painfully clear that neither knew very much about either of the teams or MLS"

Sturdy look

At the same point that the NASL was on the brink of collapse, MLS is thriving. It may not be breaking attendance records, but it has a sturdy look about it. From the perilous – almost fatal – year of 2002, when the league suddenly shrank from 12 clubs down to 10, it has steadily built itself up to 16 teams, and next season it will add another two – Vancouver Whitecaps and Portland Timbers – as it approaches the 20 that is the norm in Europe.

There are, Garber assures us, plenty of other American – and Canadian – cities interested in joining the league. Indeed, the 19th slot has already been awarded to Montreal Impact, who will join MLS in 2012. Actually, the European norm of 20 teams may even be too small for this huge country, where the pro baseball and basketball leagues each have 30 teams, and gridiron has 32.

For Garber, 2010 was "a great year". He pointed to the huge interest aroused throughout the country by the national side's World Cup heroics, particularly Landon Donovan's late goal against Algeria that propelled the USA, as group winners, into the second round.

Donovan, of course, is an MLS player. However, there seems to be little connection between World Cup popularity and attendances at MLS games. The average attendance in 2009 was 16,040; in 2010 it was only marginally better, at 16,675.

That disconnection may well have helped MLS later in the year when the disappointing news arrived that the US had been beaten by Qatar in the race to stage the 2022 World Cup. The reaction in the American media was muted, to put it mildly, and anyway Garber had his own, home-generated positive news to offer: the continuing building of stadiums.

New stadiums in Philadelphia and New York were opened in 2010, while construction has begun on one in Kansas City which will bring the total of new soccer-specific stadiums to eight. Sponsorship money, said Garber, went up 15 per cent in 2010.

The overall picture for MLS reveals a league beginning to believe in its own structural and financial security. ●

Hosts fall at first hurdle

Non-FIFA member fails to get out of group stage in Caribbean Cup

MARTINIQUE

STEVE MENARY

HOSTING THE 2010 Caribbean Cup – also referred to as the Caribbean Championship – could not inspire Martinique to victory as they crashed out in the group stage.

More than 6,000 fans turned out at the Pierre Aliker Dillon Stadium for the hosts' first game, against 2008 runners-up Grenada, and a penalty 11 minutes from time by Jose Goron, who plays for local side Case-Pilote, earned a 1-1 draw and ensured another big crowd were present for their second game, against Cuba.

Martinique moved the ball well early on, but Eddy Heurlie was the busier of the two goalkeepers and Cuba centre-half Jeniet Molina opened the scoring in the 28th minute.

The Cubans were then reduced to nine men when Marcel Companion was dismissed for an off-the-ball incident near half-time and Hanier Cantillo followed in the second half for dissent after referee Trevor Taylor had booked him for time-wasting. Cuba were forced to reorganise in a 4-3-1 formation but, despite their two-man advantage, Martinique lacked imagination and could not score.

They needed to beat Trinidad & Tobago in their final game to stand any chance of progressing, but they produced a feeble display and lost 1-0 to finish bottom of their group and out of the tournament.

> **"French clubs come here a couple of times a year to see our best players"**
>
> *Former Auxerre player Patrick Percin, a native of Martinique*

Great expectations

Martinique began the 2010 Caribbean Cup with great expectations after pipping Guadeloupe and Haiti to the rights to host a tournament that had previously produced some success on the pitch. They had beaten Jamaica on penalties to win in 1993, were runners-up in 1994 and reached the semi-finals on three other occasions in an event that also offers a vital source of competitive football.

A French department, Martinique cannot join FIFA and enter the World Cup, so France is a big pull for players such as Arsenal's Gael Clichy and former Auxerre star Patrick Percin.

"We only have this tournament and the Coupe de L'Outre Mer," says Percin, who in October captained Martinique to victory over Reunion in the latter tournament – a biennial event for French colonies.

"It's amateur football in Martinique, but you can negotiate with a club to give you some money or they can help you with a house and a car. It's easier for our players to go pro now as there's these tournaments and French clubs come here a couple of times a year to see our best players."

After two spells with Auxerre, Percin has returned home to play for Belimois, a new team who are the current Martinique Cup holders despite playing in the second division. There are 68 clubs in Martinique split into four leagues, with 14 in each of the top three leagues then two groups of 13 in the regional bottom tier.

The current top-flight champions are Riviere-Pilote, but Fabrice Reuperne and Kevin Parsemain were the only players from the club in the Martinique squad that won the 2010 Coupe de l'Outre Mer in Paris, their first tournament success for 17 years.

Caribbean Cup opposition is clearly too strong for Martinique's best however, with Jamaica retaining the trophy by beating Guadeloupe on penalties after a 1-1 draw in extra time. ●

Picture: www.digicelfootball.com

Hard graft...Martinique's players trudge off the pitch after battling to a 1-1 draw with Grenada in the opening game of the 2010 Caribbean Cup

Flu outbreak

Fluminense celebrated their first league title in more than a quarter of a century

TWELVE MONTHS after celebrating an extraordinary escape from relegation, Fluminense were crowned champions of Brazil for the second time, and the first since 1984. For the second year running the title went to a Rio de Janeiro club on the final day of the 38-match season; and to further illustrate the fluidity of Brazilian football, last year's champions, Flamengo, finished just two points off the relegation zone.

The Sao Paulo stranglehold on the title has come to a halt. Following the introduction of the league format in 2003, clubs from Brazil's richest state monopolised the trophy for five years, from 2004 to 2008, with three of those titles being won by Sao Paulo FC and their coach Muricy Ramalho – who now celebrates yet another triumph as boss of Fluminense.

After the World Cup, Ramalho effectively turned down the chance to take over the national side when Fluminense refused to release him and he decided not to walk out. Many doubted his capacity to adapt to life in Rio, but the grumpy figure soon set about creating a side in his own image.

As with Sao Paulo, Fluminense were built on a tight defence – the fewest goals conceded in the league – in which centre-back Leandro Euzebio had an excellent campaign. There were two flying wing-backs – Mariano down the right was especially effective – and a little Argentinian, Dario Conca, pulling the strings in midfield. Conca was also superb at curling free-kicks and corners into the box, and – in typical Ramalho fashion – Fluminense always looked to take maximum advantage from set-pieces.

The champions also benefitted from the strong participation of their sponsor, the private healthcare company Unimed, whose massive investment includes paying the wages of the big-name players. Whether such a model is sustainable is another matter, but for the time being it has allowed Fluminense to assemble a squad with considerable depth.

> **"Many doubted Ramalho's capacity to adapt to life in Rio but the grumpy figure soon set about creating a side in his own image"**

Star forward Fred missed much of the campaign with injury, while Deco, who was brought back from England, had similar problems. However, the squad was so strong that Juliano Belletti, who arrived from Chelsea with Deco, rarely made it off the bench.

Corinthians, Fluminense's closest rivals for most of the campaign, proved worryingly dependent on Ronaldo. At 34, and with so many knee problems behind him, the great striker lacks the mobility of old but, in bursts, he is still able to impose his quality on the game when fit – which was not nearly often enough for Corinthians' cause. They struggled without him, especially away from home where they won only four times. Fluminense managed eight, Cruzeiro nine.

A last-day win took Cruzeiro above Corinthians to second, but they could only lament their slow start to the season when they were absorbed in the Libertadores Cup and then had to deal with the hangover of a quarter-final elimination. They took time to pick up pace – with a genuine out-and-out goalscorer it may not have been too late.

Gremio had a similar lament, but no such worries about a goalscorer. Jonas caught fire, and with 23 goals was easily the championship's leading marksman. But the team suffered a disastrous start, spending some time in the relegation zone before powering through to finish fourth.

After seeing off such opposition, Ramalho declared that this had been the most difficult title of his career. A large part of the explanation comes from the fact that World Cup year puts an extra strain on the problematic Brazilian calendar.

The championship runs from mid-May to early December, so every four years it has to shut down while the World Cup is on then hurriedly catch up with the fixture pile-up. Squads are rarely as deep as in Europe and there is little tradition of rotation, so the outcome is that many overworked players pick up injuries and it is extremely hard for teams to maintain consistency.

Ramalho is also entitled to believe that he beat a stronger field than his Sao Paulo team overcame between 2006 and 2008. The strength of the Brazilian currency is visible on the pitch as it is easier to bring players back from Europe and for clubs to hold on to their own stars for a while longer. Brazilian clubs are also able to snap up players from elsewhere on the continent. Fluminense's Conca was the player of the tournament, with his compatriot Walter Montillo of Cruzeiro not far behind, and Uruguay's World Cup striker Sebastian Abreu was the key man in Botafogo's campaign.

In addition to a stronger cast, the 2010 Brazilian Championship was also interesting from a tactical point of view, with many teams experimenting with the 4-2-3-1 formation. In recent years clubs have often been dependent on their attacking full-backs, with the central midfielders providing cover and taking on more defensive duties. But 4-2-3-1 calls for more versatility all round, with the full-backs also having to defend and the central midfielders needing to do more on the ball.

Average crowds still disappoint at around the 17,000 mark, though this would be higher were the Maracana in Rio and Mineirao in Belo Horizonte not closed for building work. There is also a case to be made for the view that ticket prices are now too high.

The other black mark came in the closing stages, with fans putting pressure on their own players to lose matches in order to harm the prospects of a local rival – the most blatant case coming in the penultimate round when Palmeiras fans were anxious their team should lose at home to Fluminense and thus make it harder for rivals Corinthians to win the title.

This type of behaviour infringes the integrity of the championship and has even led some to call for a return to the previous play-off system. ●

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Title lift...Fluminense players hoist striker Emerson after his goal gave them a 1-0 win over Guarani and clinched the Brazilian championship

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THE WINNERS World Soccer

XAVI, THE BRILLIANT midfield orchestrator of Spain's 2010 World Cup triumph, is your choice as *World Soccer's* World Player of the Year.

The 29-year-old Barcelona star saw off competition from 2009's winner Lionel Messi, World Cup stars Diego Forlan and Wesley Sneijder, as well as Barca and Spain team-mate Andres Iniesta, to become the first Spaniard to win the award, which is now in its 29th year.

This year's contest was one of the closest in the award's history, with Xavi, Messi, Sneijder, Forlan and Iniesta all receiving a significant proportion of the total vote.

The victory is a recognition by *World Soccer* readers of Xavi's intelligent passing game: a hallmark of both the Spain team that triumphed over Holland in July's World Cup Final and the exciting Barcelona side that retained the Spanish league title and was squeezed out of the Champions League semi-final by Jose Mourinho's Internazionale.

Nine of the players who finished in the top 10 were among the star performers in South Africa, with the exception being Diego Milito, who scored both Inter's goals in their Champions League Final victory over Bayern Munich.

The results confirm Spain's status as the world's top league. Six of the top 10 play their club football in the Primera Division, while three play in Italy with Inter and one in Germany (Bayern Munich's Arjen Robben). There were no players from England's Premier League in the top 10.

Spain's World Cup success was recognised by *World Soccer* readers with a comprehensive victory in the World Team of the Year category. The world champions received almost two-thirds of the vote, ahead of European club champions Inter.

However, it was not a clean sweep for Spanish football. Mourinho won the World Manager of the Year award for the third time following his Champions League triumph.

In the Young Player award, there was recognition of Germany's exciting World Cup performances, with Thomas Muller of Bayern Munich taking the prize, ahead of his international team-mate Mesut Ozil.

Votes were cast from more than 40 countries, including Australia, Estonia and Greece, to once again demonstrate the global nature of the *World Soccer* awards. ●

World Player of the Year
XAVI

AWARDS 2010

World Team of the Year
SPAIN

Young Player of the Year
THOMAS MULLER

World Manager of the Year
JOSE MOURINHO

WorldSoccer AWARDS 2010

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR		% of votes
1	Xavi (Barcelona & Spain)	25.8
2	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	24.1
3	Wesley Sneijder (Internazionale & Holland)	17.3
4	Diego Forlan (Atletico Madrid & Uruguay)	15.8
5	Andres Iniesta (Barcelona & Spain)	10.8
6	Diego Milito (Internazionale & Argentina)	1.2
7	David Villa (Valencia/Barcelona & Spain)	1.1
8	Iker Casillas (Real Madrid & Spain)	0.9
9	Samuel Eto'o (Internazionale & Cameroon)	0.5
10	Arjen Robben (Bayern Munich & Holland)	0.4
	Others	2.1

MANAGER OF THE YEAR		
1	Jose Mourinho (Internazionale/Real Madrid)	48.3
2	Vicente Del Bosque (Spain)	26.6
3	Oscar Tabarez (Uruguay)	5.2
4	Joachim Low (Germany)	3.3
5	Pep Guardiola (Barcelona)	2.5
6	Harry Redknapp (Tottenham Hotspur)	2.4
7	Bert Van Marwijk (Holland)	2.3
8	Louis Van Gaal (Bayern Munich)	2.2
9	Ricki Herbert (New Zealand)	2.1
10	Carlo Ancelotti (Chelsea)	1.9
	Others	3.2

TEAM OF THE YEAR		
1	Spain	63.3
2	Internazionale	16.5
3	Barcelona	5.3
4	Uruguay	3.5
5	Germany	2.4
6	Holland	2.3
7	Atletico Madrid	1.6
8	Ghana	1.2
9	Bayern Munich	1.1
10	Santos	0.9
	Others	1.9

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR		
1	Thomas Muller (Bayern Munich & Germany)	45.8
2	Mesut Ozil (Werder Bremen/Real Madrid & Germany)	27.2
3	Gareth Bale (Tottenham Hotspur & Wales)	8.5
4	Javier Hernandez (Guadalajara/Man United & Mexico)	6.3
5	Neymar (Santos & Brazil)	4.1
6	Pedro (Barcelona & Spain)	1.7
7	Coutinho (Vasco da Gama/Internazionale & Brazil)	1.5
8	Sergio Asenjo (Atletico Madrid & Spain)	1.4
9	Jozy Altidore (Villarreal & USA)	1.2
10	Xherdan Shaqiri (Basle & Switzerland)	1.1
	Others	1.2

Runner-up...Messi

Third...Sneijder

Fifth...Iniesta

Honourable mention... Uruguay's Tabarez

Always involved...Barcelona

World Cup joy...Ghana

German craft...Ozil

Wing wizardry...Bale

Emergence...Coutinho

HOW YOU VOTED

PREVIOUS WINNERS

WORLD PLAYER		% of votes
1982	Paolo Rossi (Juventus & Italy)	23
1983	Zico (Udinese & Brazil)	28
1984	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	54
1985	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	21
1986	Diego Maradona (Napoli & Argentina)	36
1987	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	39
1988	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	43
1989	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	24
1990	Lothar Matthaus (Internazionale & West Germany)	22
1991	Jean-Pierre Papin (Marseille & France)	25
1992	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	19
1993	Roberto Baggio (Juventus & Italy)	14
1994	Paolo Maldini (Milan & Italy)	27
1995	Gianluca Vialli (Juventus & Italy)	18
1996	Ronaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	17
1997	Ronaldo (Barcelona/Internazionale & Brazil)	27
1998	Zinedine Zidane (Juventus & France)	23
1999	Rivaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	42
2000	Luis Figo (Barcelona/Real Madrid & Portugal)	26
2001	Michael Owen (Liverpool & England)	31
2002	Ronaldo (Internazionale/Real Madrid & Brazil)	26
2003	Pavel Nedved (Juventus & Czech Republic)	36
2004	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	29
2005	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	39
2006	Fabio Cannavaro (Juventus/Real Madrid & Italy)	40
2007	Kaka (Milan & Brazil)	52
2008	Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United & Portugal)	48
2009	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	43

First winner...Rossi

Double success...Van Basten

England's finest...Owen

WORLD MANAGER		% of votes
1982	Enzo Bearzot (Italy)	49
1983	Sepp Piontek (Denmark)	29
1984	Michel Hidalgo (France)	30
1985	Terry Venables (Barcelona)	30
1986	Guy Thys (Belgium)	15
1987	Johan Cruyff (Ajax)	25
1988	Rinus Michels (Holland/Bayer Leverkusen)	48
1989	Arrigo Sacchi (Milan)	42
1990	Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany)	53
1991	Michel Platini (France)	42
1992	Richard Moller Nielsen (Denmark)	28
1993	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	21
1994	Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil)	17
1995	Louis Van Gaal (Ajax)	42
1996	Berti Vogts (Germany)	28
1997	Ottmar Hitzfeld (Borussia Dortmund)	17
1998	Arsene Wenger (Arsenal)	28
1999	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	60
2000	Dino Zoff (Italy)	18
2001	Gerard Houllier (Liverpool)	28
2002	Guus Hiddink (South Korea)	28
2003	Carlo Ancelotti (Milan)	20
2004	Jose Mourinho (Porto/Chelsea)	36
2005	Jose Mourinho (Chelsea)	34
2006	Marcello Lippi (Italy)	35
2007	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	26
2008	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	37
2009	Pep Guardiola (Barcelona)	62

Leading off...Bearzot

Ajax glory...Van Gaal

Top in '03...Ancelotti

WORLD TEAM		% of votes
1982	Brazil	30
1983	Hamburg	29
1984	France	45
1985	Everton	42
1986	Argentina	15
1987	Porto	38
1988	Holland	43
1989	Milan	51
1990	West Germany	28
1991	France	20
1992	Denmark	37
1993	Parma	24
1994	Milan	33
1995	Ajax	50
1996	Nigeria	31
1997	Borussia Dortmund	20
1998	France	35
1999	Manchester United	61
2000	France	33
2001	Liverpool	26
2002	Brazil	24
2003	Milan	23
2004	Greece	25
2005	Liverpool	27
2006	Barcelona	42
2007	Iraq	22
2008	Spain	41
2009	Barcelona	76

Great entertainers...Brazil 1982

Cup-winners Cup triumph...Parma

Star turn...Robinho

YOUNG PLAYER		% of votes
2005	Robinho (Santos/Real Madrid & Brazil)	30
2006	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	36
2007	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	33
2008	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	44
2009	Sergio Aguero (Atletico Madrid & Argentina)	45

XAVI

2010 World Player of the Year

Recognition for pass master

XAVI DID NOT score 55 times in 51 games for Barcelona in 2010 like Leo Messi. And he wasn't top scorer in the Champions League like Messi either. He didn't win a domestic double and the European Cup like Wesley Sneijder. He didn't score the key goals in a cup Final, the league's decisive game and the Champions League Final like Diego Milito. And he didn't score the winner at the World Cup like Andres Iniesta. In fact, he didn't score any goals at the World Cup, let alone five of them like David Villa, Diego Forlan, Thomas Muller or Sneijder.

But Xavi is still an extremely worthy winner of *World Soccer*'s Player of the Year award. He may even be an overdue one.

There is a kind of embarrassment, almost guilt, about declaring him the best player in the world this year, as if we want to rectify the mistake before it is too late – and Xavi is 30 years old, after all. It is as if we're all saying sorry for taking so long to realise just how good you are, for not appreciating the brilliance in your simplicity.

This award feels like it is being handed out not just for 2010 but for the previous year too. And the year before that. It's as if we are awarding Xavi for an era. His era.

But it's not just an apology for taking so long. There is a kind of morally superior simplicity to it too, a kind of footballing puritanism, a moral duty to recognise those that make it happen – not for themselves, but for others. It is also sorry for getting blinded by all that stardust, by the goals and the tricks, by the men who dominate the agenda and take the glory. Xavi rarely takes the glory; instead, he gives it.

> **It is hard to disagree with the argument that Xavi is the greatest central midfielder Spain has produced**

It is not that he is a better player than the rest, which he is, but that he makes the rest better players too. That is what we have come to recognise. It is what people like about him.

"I need team-mates, people to combine with," Xavi says. "Without team-mates football has no meaning. I am no one without them."

The response is obvious in that they might well be no one without you. They certainly wouldn't be the same. Perhaps not even Leo Messi.

Xavi refers to himself as "basically a passer", but that simple phrase contains so much more. Spanish TV commentator Andres Montes called him "Humphrey Bogart" because, like Sam in *Casablanca*, Xavi was asked to play it again. And again. And again. In the *clasico* last season he completed almost 100 passes at the Santiago Bernabeu; this season he did reach three figures at Camp Nou – 114 to be precise. And, unusually for him, he also scored the opening goal.

By the end of last season, Xavi had completed over 400 more passes than any other player in Spain and over 400 more than any player from any other club in the Champions League. In the game against Arsenal he completed more passes than their entire midfield put together. And he is doing the same again this season. In the last 12 months, a player has completed 100 or more passes just 24 times in the whole of Europe. On 12 of those occasions that player was Xavi.

As Dani Alves insists, Xavi does not just pass the ball, he forces the play by making the angles for his team-mates, by obliging them to move with his passes. "Xavi," the Brazilian says, "plays in the future." He controls the game, dominating the opposition, leading his side. He is the ideologue, the metronome, the conductor. And not just for any old sides either. He does it for arguably the finest teams Spanish football has ever seen, maybe even the finest the world has ever seen.

It is hard to disagree with the argument that Xavi is the greatest central midfielder Spain has produced. It is just a pity it has taken until now for everyone to argue it. Still, at least we realised before it was too late.

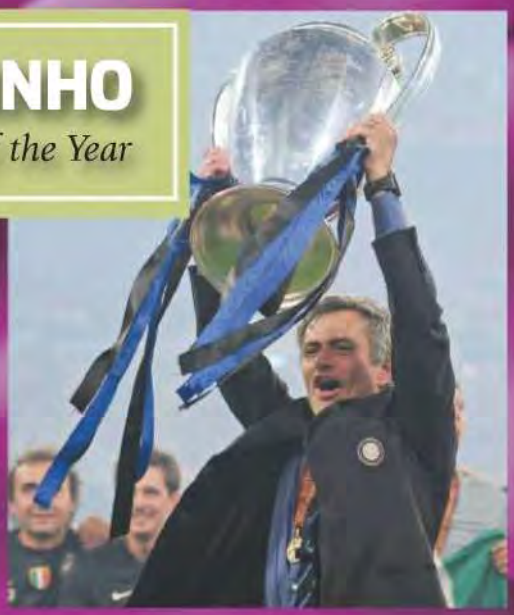
In 2008, Spain were European champions. In 2009, Barcelona won the treble. In 2010, Spain won the World Cup. They all did so playing wonderful football, unique football. There is a clarity of identity about those teams that has possibly never been seen before. That identity is Xavi's identity. In each of those successes, Xavi touched the ball more than anyone else and yet, each time he got it, he had just one thought in his mind: give it to someone else.

Xavi was the man dictating the pace, the flow, the speed, the game; game after game after game. As the Spanish say: "The current Spain team and the current Barcelona side dance to Xavi's tune." And that tune is the perfect symphony.

Sid Lowe

JOSE MOURINHO

2010 World Manager of the Year



CONTROVERSY stalked Jose Mourinho throughout 2010. The year ended with a UEFA ban for the "Special One" after he had encouraged two of his Real Madrid players to get sent off and avoid bans in the latter knockout stage of the Champions League. The affair may prove to be a mere footnote in Mourinho's career, but it was indicative of his determination to manipulate the rule book to his advantage.

Mourinho was again a winner in 2010. It may have been a World Cup year but he achieved arguably his greatest triumph in steering Internazionale to their first European Cup for 45 years.

The world's best footballing team, Barcelona, were out-thought in the semi-finals when Mourinho accused the Catalan club of being "obsessed" with winning the Champions League in Real Madrid's Bernabeu home.

Mourinho ended up triumphing there in the Final – and then joined Real, the club for whom pursuit of a 10th European Cup has become an overriding obsession.

Madrid took a gamble on a coach not widely noted for his attacking principles. But Mourinho also took a huge risk at a club where coaches have been all too expendable in the pursuit of silverware. He was humbled by November's humiliating defeat to Barcelona, but only a fool would write off Jose Mario dos Santos Felix Mourinho.

SPAIN

2010 World Team of the Year

THERE can surely be no complaints about Spain's recognition as the best team on the planet for the second time in three years.

Spain's victory is also one for Barcelona, the club that provided the backbone of the team that won the World Cup in South Africa last summer.

For so long, Spain were the best team never to have won the World Cup. Now, after victory at Euro 2008, they have the confidence and mental strength to match their many other talents.

The 2010 World Team award is a victory for stylish, intelligent football. It is as much for the manner of the victory as the victory itself.

THOMAS MULLER

2010 Young Player of the Year

ALWAYS keen to throw an English expression into the mix, the German press often describe the brilliant 21-year-old Bayern Munich and Germany attacker as a "Shooting star". And how apt the phrase is.

A virtual unknown at the start of last season – with only four appearances for the Bayern first team – local lad Muller would have been satisfied with a place on the bench and the odd Bundesliga cameo.

However, all that was to change when arch-promoter of youth Louis Van Gaal swaggered in to coach the Bavarians.

Impressed by Muller's powers of acceleration, poise in front of goal, do-or-die spirit and ability to operate in a variety of positions (attacking midfielder, in the hole, second striker or on either wing), Van Gaal promptly parachuted him into the side. He did not have to wait long for his hunch to pay off, either, as the youngster went on to play in almost every game as Bayern swept to a domestic double and reached the Final of the Champions League.

Awarded his first full international cap in a friendly loss to Argentina in February, Muller did nothing out of the ordinary that night in Munich. But it would be an entirely different story at the World Cup in South Africa, where he turned out to be a key element in Germany's widely lauded third place, not only scoring five times to finish as the tournament's joint-top goalscorer but also winning the competition's best young player award.

Make no mistake: without his finishing, verve on the right-flank and counter-attacking flair, Germany would not have been nearly so effective and spectacular.

Proactive not reactive: *how the clasico was won*

The Barca blueprint

Jonathan Wilson explains how principles raised and nurtured in Holland were at the root of Barcelona's stunning 5-0 victory over Real Madrid

Let the spectacle begin...Camp Nou is filled to capacity as Real Madrid prepare to kick off against Barcelona

IT IS FAIRLY CLEAR what sort of football Roman Abramovich wants to see Chelsea play. He fell in love with the sport, we're told, watching Manchester United – fruitlessly – beat Real Madrid 4-3 in 2003, and his recent flirtation with former Barcelona sporting director Txiki Begiristain suggests a desire to see his side play with the fluency and technical mastery of Pep Guardiola's side.

The problem is that Barcelona's sort of integrated, coherent football sits uneasily with the oligarchical model. Football, as countless sugar daddies have discovered, is not just about going out and buying a dozen great players.

Arrigo Sacchi quit as sporting director of Real Madrid in the first galacticos era because there was "no project". He objected to the use of defensive midfielder Claude Makelele to plug the gaps left by the great names who drifted around in front of him, performing their creative duties with little sense of defensive responsibility.

This, said Sacchi, was "reactive" football, a comment which seemed particularly relevant during this season's first *clasico* as the second generation of galacticos, with their galactic coach, were humbled by a side featuring eight players who had come through its youth academy.

> **"Ronaldo's switch to the right was a recognition by Mourinho that he could not be trusted to track the surges of Dani Alves"**

Jose Mourinho switched Cristiano Ronaldo and Angel Di Maria, so that rather than playing on the left, where he has been so devastating this season, Ronaldo was on the right. It was there, of course, that he enjoyed the bulk of his success for Manchester United, but the switch in itself was an admission of the player's failings, a recognition by Mourinho that he could not be trusted to track the forward surges of Dani Alves.

That Ronaldo was up against Eric Abidal, a more defensive option brought in for Maxwell, indicated Pep Guardiola had been anticipating this and was a sign that Mourinho, for once, did not have the tactical edge.

The switch also disrupted Madrid's pattern. Ozil's link-up with Ronaldo has been one of the highlights of their play this season, but it was non-existent against Barcelona. That, of course, was partly because Madrid saw so little of the ball, which meant Ozil had to track Xavi, something he failed to do. Often without a direct opponent, and confident in Barcelona's ability to keep the ball, Xavi advanced far more than he usually does, with the result that he emerged unexpectedly in the box to score the opening goal.

Ozil's replacement by Lassana Diarra at half-time was as close to an admission of a mistake as Mourinho is ever likely to come, but by then it was too late, partly because Barca were already 2-0 ahead, and partly because Madrid mentally looked shot; something that was evident both in their shambolic offside line and the lack of coherent pressing in midfield that further exposed that back line.

Controlled the pitch

Mourinho has proved himself spectacularly good at stopping the opposition from playing, but for Sacchi, a fundamentalist in such matters, greatness could only come from those who were "proactive", who wanted and used the ball, who controlled the pitch. There remains a lingering thought that Mourinho, tail tweaked, may return to thwart Barcelona, but even if he does, Guardiola's side has attained greatness; the 5-0 win in the *clasico* was merely another chapter in two-and-a-bit seasons of brilliance.

Lionel Messi, Xavi and David Villa were all exceptional, but the victory wasn't just to do with them, or just to do with Guardiola. Rather, this was a victory for a style that has existed at Barcelona since Rinus Michels succeeded Vic Buckingham in 1971.

Both had played key roles in establishing "total football" at Ajax, both took those principles to Barcelona and, as Johan Cruyff pointed out during the World Cup, it is now in Spain – and specifically at Camp Nou – that the old Dutch philosophy is pursued most avidly. It is remarkable how closely Barcelona's model follows that of Ajax, despite the changes football has undergone in the last four decades.

The basic shape is 4-3-3, although with modifications. Messi, as he often does in the biggest games, played less on the right than as a false No9 against Madrid, drifting behind Pedro and Villa, who then pulled far wider than an orthodox front two usually would. That stretched Madrid's back four – which had two major effects. Firstly, space was left between the two centre-backs, something Barcelona repeatedly tried to exploit with low, through balls from deep. Secondly, aware that forwards could be coming from the centre into their zones, the two Madrid full-backs dared not advance too far, which only made it easier for Barca, whose own full-backs could go forward, to dominate midfield.

As in the Dutch tradition, Barca's back four plays with a high offside line, looking to squeeze space when not in possession. Technical ability, the capacity to receive and lay off a pass in the blink of an eye even under intense pressure is taken for granted. Players interchange positions. Full-backs overlap. The ball is kept on the ground. Possession is cherished. That sort of football, rooted as it is in mutual understanding, can only come from players who have grown up with a shared philosophy. It is only possible with years of planning.

Abramovich may want to see something similar at Stamford Bridge, and appointing Begiristain may even be a building block towards it, but there must be patience – and that is something football in general lacks, never mind billionaire owners.

Frank Arnesen will be leaving Chelsea at the end of the season after six years as sporting director. His brief was to oversee youth development, but whether he has been successful will only become apparent over the next three or four years. Arsenal, the closest thing English football has to the Barcelona model, have won nothing for five years, sustaining themselves with thoughts of a glorious tomorrow.

The lesson, though, is clear: proactive football of the highest level can only be developed organically. No matter how wealthy the owner, it cannot be bought off the shelf. ●

Night of frustration...Ronaldo struggles to get the better of Abidal

Barcelona vs Real Madrid

November 29, 2010, Spanish Primera Division: Barcelona 5 Real Madrid 0

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SOUTH KOREA The country in depth – the state of the game, club-by-club guide, movers and shakers

Overseas attractions

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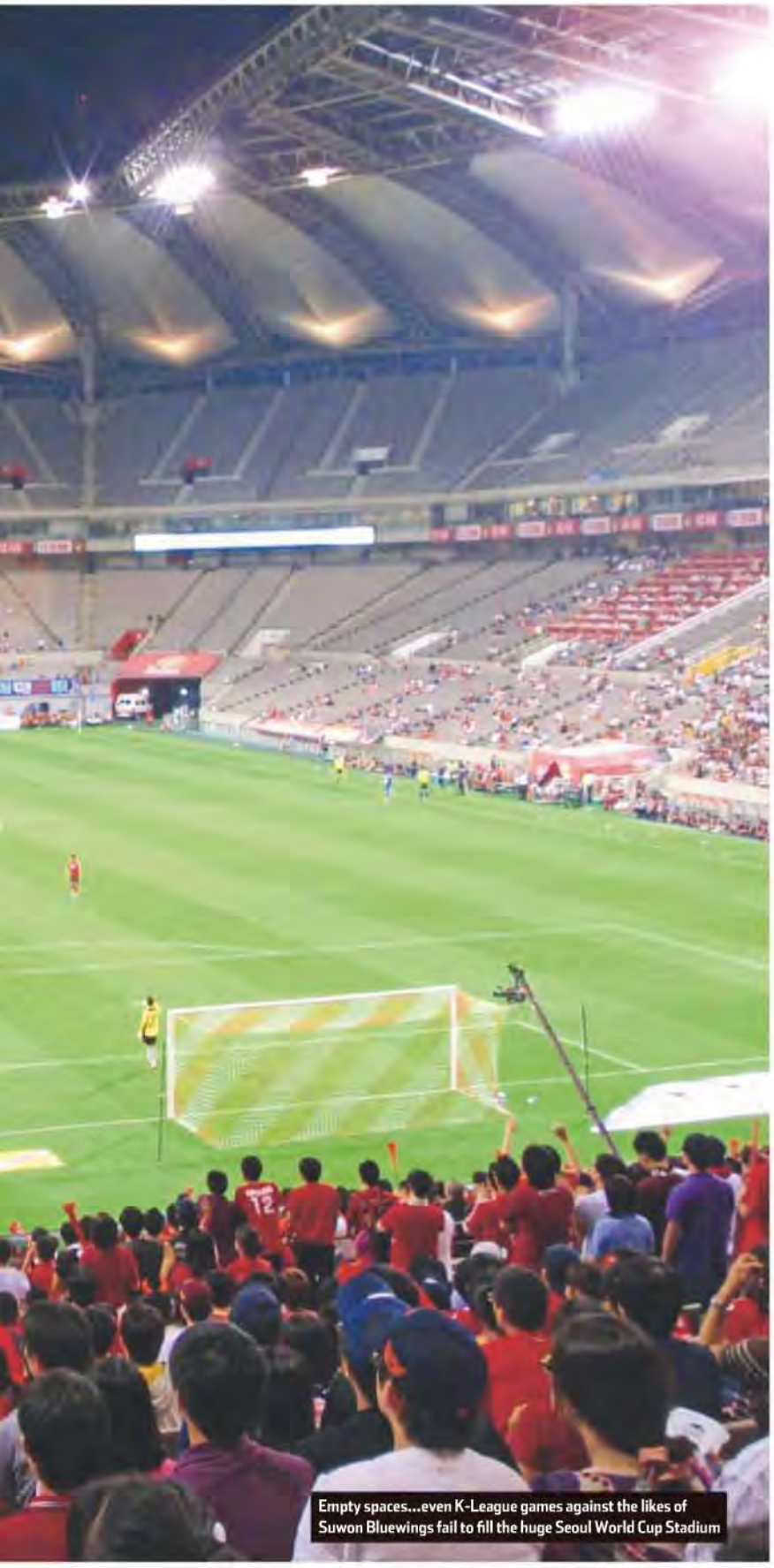

Empty spaces...even K-League games against the likes of Suwon Bluewings fail to fill the huge Seoul World Cup Stadium

Local clubs find themselves battling Europe's finest for fans

AS USUAL, the K-League championship play-off series heralded the start of the winter freeze. But as riveting as some of the games between the best-placed sides in the country's top flight can be amid the bitter cold, igniting interest among the South Korean public remains the domestic league's Achilles heel.

Rather than the problem being attracting the masses because of the weather – after all, much of the season is played in the hot, humid summer months – one of the biggest hurdles is the exotic lure of European football ...and England's Premier League in particular.

With most K-League matches played at the weekend, the competing forces of Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and Arsenal on television makes it hard for, say, Busan I'Park v Jeju United, Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma v Daegu or even the big one, Seoul v Suwon Bluewings, to pull in the fans. And that's even with the time difference thrown into the mix.

A casual walk down any Seoul street is more likely to reveal kids wearing the shirts of Barcelona and Manchester United than any of the Korean sides.

Although Seoul (30,849) and Suwon Bluewings (26,163) draw good crowds, the average attendance for K-League games during the regular season in 2010 was just 10,941 – down from 11,427 for 2009 and 12,901 the previous term. Many of the clubs in the more remote parts of the country struggle badly for support, with Gwangju Sangmu averaging just 3,782 last term and Seongnam – who have just been crowned the best team in Asia after winning the Champions League Final – mustering a mere 4,129 on average.

An envious look

The slump in attendances has not gone unnoticed by Korea Football Association president Cho Chung-yun, who must look enviously across the Sea of Japan to the J.League, where attendances have been rocketing in recent years and reports suggest that the most recent campaign will break the 20,000-barrier for average attendances.

"The K-League is doing well so far, but we do need to apply something different to increase the number of spectators in order to boost the league's image even more," says Cho. "I hope, and I am sure, that the K-League will come up with a strategic plan to make it happen.

"The problem right now in the K-League is obvious: only the big clubs are able to attract a big number of fans. It will be good if the small clubs can think outside the box to do their part, with the K-League's help."

One such example is that introduced by Seoul, who launched an initiative to draw in foreign residents by enticing them with specially priced tickets that came with free refreshments. Meanwhile, top European sides such as Barcelona and Manchester United have played high-profile

Continental clash...Suwon Bluewings' Yang Sang-min (left) and Song Ho-Young of Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma battle it out in the quarter-finals of the 2010 Asian Champions League

Own goal...the friendly against Barcelona and Dani Alves (right) last August wasn't a great success

friendlies against K-League teams and all-star select sides. However, last summer's visit by Barca ended in controversy as organizers and local fans accused the Catalan giants of contempt when they fielded a weakened team against a K-League Select XI. Whatever vision people like Cho have for the domestic game, botched glamour ties ending on a sour note is not the kind of publicity anyone would crave for their league.

On a more positive note, with four teams in the quarter-finals of the 2010 Champions League, the K-League can probably stake a claim for being the strongest in Asia – though those behind the J.League might have something to say about that. But one thing is for certain: there is no questioning the level of quality around the north-eastern rim of the continent.

"I think the players on this side of Asia are a lot more technical than those on the other side of Asia," said Seongnam captain and Australia defender Sasa Ognenovski after lifting the continent's top club title.

However, with the cream of the country's talent being snapped up by European clubs, it won't be with the best the country has to offer that the authorities will be trying to entice people into watching K-League games – at least in the short term.

"For me all the issues with football here comes from a need for more grass-roots development," says Alan Green of *The Korea Times*.

"Children spend so much time studying that there is little time for sport. That is coupled with a lack of spaces where people can easily have a kickabout.

"Football needs to be developed from an early age, with little leagues, school leagues and structured competition for young players. Quality coaching would also improve the game.

"While there were other favourable factors, [former national coach] Guus Hiddink's ability raised the game of the national squad in 2002.

"Advances in training and tactics, again from a young age, will in turn improve the professional game."

As for the crowds, there may be parallels with the development of the game as a whole according to Green, who sees the country's obsession with desk-bound education and extremely long working hours meeting in a perfect storm.

"Playing for a local side develops a sense of regionalism and pride in your team as you are a part of it," he suggests. "That could then lead to more children going to games earlier in their life and becoming a part of their local team.

"With parents working all hours and children always studying, going to watch a game at the stadium is a major time investment."

Another factor that can't be ignored are the huge stadiums left in the wake of the 2002 World Cup, which South Korea co-hosted. Even the fairly healthy crowds regularly drawn in by the K-League's better-supported sides Seoul and Suwon Bluewings look sparse in giant stadiums that can hold 68,000 and 43,000 respectively.

In the meantime, it may just be that some creative marketing – and a little more imagination in attracting foreign imports, as costly and artificial as that can appear – could be the kind of injection the K-League requires.

When something or someone grabs a Korean's attention, it tends to be fixed and collective. And while you won't be seeing the likes of David Beckham arriving anytime soon, a signing who could do for the K-League what Becks did for the MLS would certainly warm the cockles during the winter close season. ●

"The K-League can claim to be the strongest in Asia"

Superstar...David Beckham (far left) and Los Angeles Galaxy visited in 2008

Play time...sport takes second place to studying

SOUTH KOREA

Seoul, Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma, Pohang Steelers...a guide to the top-flight sides

1 SEOUL
The team from the capital won the K-League in 2010 for the first time in their present guise, defeating Jeju United in the championship play-offs Final. The title is their first in 10 years, since relocating to Seoul in 2004 from Anyang, where they were known as Anyang Cheetahs. Led by Portuguese coach Nelo Vingada, they finally clinched the honour they craved after coming so close under previous boss Senol Gunes, who left at the end of 2009.

2 INCHEON UNITED
Regarded as the role model for community-owned clubs, they have gained a good reputation for their youth set-up. Their best-placed finish was in 2005 when they were runners-up.

3 SEONGNAM ILHWA CHUNMA
The K-League's most successful side with seven league titles, they were crowned the best in Asia in 2010 after winning the Champions League. It's just a pity more fans weren't there to see them do it.

4 SUWON BLUEWINGS
The league's second-best supported team fell flat last time out. Backed by the financial clout of Samsung Electronics, they have had quite a bit of success since being founded in 1995. They managed a clean sweep of the domestic titles in 1998, but last won the K-League in 2008.

5 DAEJEON CITIZEN
Since forming 13 years ago, Daejeon have tended to float around the league's middle regions, claiming a solitary trophy success in the South Korea Cup in 2001 and making the play-offs in 2007.

6 JEONBUK MOTORS
Won their maiden title in 2009 and went on a run that took them to the quarter-finals of the Champions League. Their third-place finish in the K-League play-offs in December meant they denied Seongnam the chance to defend their Champions League crown in 2011 and they enter the competition for the second year in a row.

7 GWANGJU
Next season will mark Gwangju's debut in the K-League, having been formed towards the end of 2010. They will become the league's 16th team.

8 CHUNNAM DRAGONS
Chunnam's flurry of success in the middle of the last decade propelled coach Huh Jung-moo to the national-team post. Founded in 1994, they have won three South Korean Cups and were K-League runners-up in 2007 – their best finish.

9 BUSAN I'PARK
The south-coast club started out a semi-professional outfit in 1979 before becoming the country's third professional side in 1983, when, as Daewoo, they were one of the founder members of the K-League. They are four-time winners of the championship, the last in 1997.

10 GYEONGNAM
The first professional football club in their region, Gyeongnam have only been around since 2006. Made the play-offs in their second season – a feat they repeated in 2010 – but have yet to win a trophy.

11 ULSAN
The club are owned by one of the country's top conglomerates, Hyundai. Having city-hopped since their foundation in 1983, they went through several name changes before finally putting down their roots in the city of Ulsan. Nicknamed the Tigers, they have two K-League titles to their credit.

12 DAEGU
Eight years old, community club Daegu have yet to land a major honour since joining the league in 2003. Their best-placed finish was seventh in 2006.

13 POHANG STEELERS
With a history stretching back to 1973, Pohang joined the K-League in 1984 and – having won four league titles, two Korean FA Cups and the Champions League a record three times – they are South Korea's most successful club. Pohang were also the incubator for the talents of the country's legendary national captain Hong Myung-bo, who led the co-hosts at the 2002 World Cup.

14 GANGWON
The league's newest side before the entrance of Gwangju, Gangwon completed their second season last year. They are a community club and not owned by a commercial enterprise like many of their K-League rivals.

15 JEJU UNITED
Established in 1982 – a year before the K-League started – as Yukong Kokkiri, they seldom threatened the upper echelons in recent years until blazing a trail to the runners-up spot this time round. They are the oldest professional side in the country still in existence and moved to the island of Jeju four years ago, when they took on their present moniker, after it was agreed that too many K-League sides were concentrated in the greater Seoul metropolitan area.

16 GWANGJU SANGMU
A calm oasis amid the tumult of South Korea's mandatory two-year military service for men, Gwangju Sangmu are the club of the armed forces and, by extension, made up entirely of conscripts carrying out their national duty. Largely unsuccessful – perhaps because of their relative youth – the team, formed in 1984, are currently homeless after their contract with the city of Gwangju expired. It is still unclear where they will play home games in 2011.

The movers and shakers in SOUTH KOREAN FOOTBALL

CHO CHUNG-YUN
The FA president replaced the all-powerful Chung Mong-joon and his resume contains many positives, having helped the hosting for the 2002 World Cup and building of a national football centre. Former youth player, ex-coach of Ulsan and a commentator for national broadcaster KBS.

KWAK JUNG-HWAN
The K-League president is a vocal proponent of initiatives to boost local attendances and wants to emulate the example of the J.League in Japan. Keen to push the league's clubs on the continental and worldwide stage, and helped bring Barcelona to Seoul last summer for a friendly.

CHA BUM-KUN
A huge figure not only within the game in South Korea but also the entire continent. As a player, coach and now regular pundit, the embodiment of everything exceptional in the South Korean game. Played in the Bundesliga in the late 1970s and 80s with Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayer Leverkusen, and scored a record 55 goals in 121 games for his country. A former national coach, he was in charge of K-League side Suwon Bluewings until his resignation last summer.

HUH JUNG-MOO
Coached the national team to their first last-16 in an overseas World Cup in South Africa. A midfielder with PSV Eindhoven in his playing days, he is now in charge of Incheon United and will be expected to turn one of the K-League's less fancied sides into a top-six fixture.

YOO BYUNG-SOO
At one point linked with a move to England – with Premier League side Bolton Wanderers, where countryman Lee Chung-young plys his trade – he is the K-League's hottest property at the moment. At 22, this free-scoring striker has played only two full seasons in South Korea's top flight but has left those who have seen him with little doubt that he could be the next big-money export to one of the major leagues in Europe. Was this season's top scorer with 23 goals – remarkable considering his club, Incheon United, finished well outside the play-off positions.

DEJAN DAMJANOVIC
Macedonia striker whose talent and contribution means he has done more than most K-League imports to warm the hearts of the local faithful. Played for Incheon United and now Seoul, where he picked up his first league title in 2010.

LEE WOON-JAE
Until the 2010 World Cup it seemed the Suwon Bluewings goalkeeper was an omnipresent figure on the international scene. Now retired from the national side after an awesome 132 caps and four World Cups – his first coming in the United States in 1994 – the 37-year-old is one of the elder statesmen of the game, having won every major domestic honour as well as the Asian Champions League.

HAN SUNG-JOO
A former foreign minister, he was the chairman of South Korea's bid committee for the 2022 World Cup. One of the key drivers behind the quest to bring the tournament back to the country for the second time and the outline plan to stage as many as 22 matches in North Korea.

CHUNG MONG-JOON
FIFA vice-president, member of the powerful Hyundai-founding family and a prominent South Korean politician who is considered the background driving force behind the the 2022 World Cup bid. Has hinted he might seek to unseat FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

● With no promotion or relegation, South Korea's only professional league exists in something of a glass box, with the end-of-season championship play-off series and subsequent qualification for Asia's continental competition the crux of its excitement. There are two non-professional leagues below the K-League: the National League and the K3 League.

● The play-off series involves the top six finishers in the K-League. The team that finishes top of the table automatically qualifies for the Final, with the runner-up going straight into a one-game semi-final. The teams finishing third through to sixth battle it out in one-legged play-offs, with the winner of each going head-to-head for the other semi-final berth.

● The K-League champions, runners-up and play-off semi-finalist, plus the Korean FA Cup winners, all go into the following season's Asian Champions League.

SIX OF THE BEST NORTH EUROPEAN

Baye Djiby FALL
Molde (Nor)

AFTER nine months on the fringes at Lokomotiv Moscow – principally because the coach who brought him from Odense, Rashid Rakhimov, was fired almost immediately – the Senegalese striker was given the green light early in 2010 to join Molde on loan. And the least one can say is that the African has found the Norwegian Premier League much more conducive to his characteristics of powerful running, physical resilience and aerial ability.

Molde's top scorer with 16 goals in 28 league games, his assured finishing was crucial to keeping the relegation wolf from the club's door, but Fall's form in Norway should come as no surprise to anyone with knowledge of the Scandinavian scene. During three productive seasons in Danish football, from 2006 to 2009, he could not stop scoring for Randers as well as Odense, and was voted the Superliga's player of the year in 2008.

The 25-year-old was originally a graduate of the Auxerre academy, where his team-mates included Arsenal's Abou Diaby.

Alfred FINNBOGASON
Breidablik (Ice)

ICELAND'S victory over Scotland in a European Under-21 Championship play-off in the autumn had a special significance for Finnbogason because, as a boy, he spent two years living in Edinburgh while his father studied at the city's university. During that period, the youngster starred for Hutchison Vale, the Scottish capital's most successful boys' club, and to this day the 21-year-old swears allegiance to Hibernian.

Modelling his game on his schoolboy hero, Celtic's Swedish goal machine Henrik Larsson, the 2010 season was one of across-the-board success. Not only did his club, Breidablik, snatch the Icelandic title on goal difference from FH Hafnarfjordur, he also finished the year as the league's joint top scorer with 14 goals and was voted player of the season.

Awarded his first full cap in March, in a friendly against the Faroe Islands, he left Breidablik at the end of the season to join Belgian side Lokeren.

Alexander GERNDT
Helsingborgs (Swe)

ALLSVENSKAN outfit Helsingborgs has certainly been a hot spot for strikers in recent times, with legendary Sweden international Henrik Larsson, compatriot Mats Magnusson, the Brazilian Alvaro Santos and Arild Stavrum from Norway all keeping the goals flowing for the Reds. Now 24-year-old Gerndt, who was signed from Gefle in July, is upholding the local tradition, with his 12 strikes in 15 games helping his side to the runners-up spot.

Hailing from Gotland, a Swedish island in the Baltic Sea, Gerndt – who forms a highly-effective attacking duo with Rasmus Jonsson – is living proof that persistence pays. He was almost a ghost in residence at his first top-flight club, AIK Solna, and was declared surplus to requirements in 2008, only to subsequently reconfigure his career on loan at second-tier Sirius and then with top-flight Gefle. At one point last summer he seemed set to move to Heerenveen – that Dutch home-from-home for Scandinavian talent – only to ultimately opt for a three-and-a-half year contract with Helsingborgs instead.

STRIKERS

Nick Bidwell picks half a dozen of 2010's top front runners in the Baltic and Nordic leagues

Nathan JUNIOR

Skonto Riga (Lat)

SKONTO claimed their first Virsliga title in six long and frustrating years in 2010, and for that two men deserve particular praise: returning coach Aleksandrs Starkovs, for his firm hand on the tiller and tactical awareness, and young Brazilian striker Junior, whose 18 goals made him the club's top scorer.

Junior's haul was quite a feat for someone who just a year ago was considered to be a defender and was only tried up front because of a lack of other options.

The 21-year-old from Rio de Janeiro personifies the strength in depth of the Brazilian game. Rejected as a youth by Flamengo and feeling Europe might be a better launching pad, the teen managed to earn himself a spot in the junior squad of leading Cypriot side Anorthosis Famagusta, where he stayed for three years before joining Skonto in 2008. A loan spell at Olimps/RFS provided him with the perfect crash course in Baltic football and after being recalled to Skonto he began to carve out a niche for himself – first as a defensive substitute, then as a born-again hit man.

Juho MAKELA

HJK Helsinki (Fin)

THE towering 27-year-old did more than most to pave the way for HJK's triumph in the 2010 Veikkausliiga – the capital city club's 23rd Finnish championship crown.

In his second spell at HJK, Makela began the season in a blaze of glory, scoring eight in four games and, though the blitz wasn't to last, he ended up as the division's top finisher, with 16 goals, an honour he had achieved once before in 2005, also with HJK.

Married to a former Miss Finland, he has taken his uncomplicated brand of hustle and bustle to foreign fields, spending a couple of years in Scotland with Hearts and on loan to Thun in Switzerland, but generally failed to do himself justice on the migratory trail.

He won his first cap as long ago as 2004, in a friendly with China, but has never been able to hold down a regular spot for the national side. Not that he has given up hope.

"My childhood dream of wearing the white-and-blue of Finland did come true, but that is not the end of the road for me," he says. "My aim is to become a regular for my country – and, believe me, the hope is alive."

Cesar SANTIN

Copenhagen (Den)

SCANDINAVIAN football holds absolutely no secrets for Santin, a highly skilled and versatile Brazilian who, after four excellent seasons in Sweden with Kalmar, is now in his third campaign for Copenhagen.

A proven marksman and elusive dribbler who is always ready to work for the good of the team, the 29-year-old is not far short of the complete package. In the early part of the new millennium he was good enough to warrant a place in the top-flight squads of both Gremio and Vitoria Bahia. However, he found favour and playing time decidedly hard to come by and had to make do with a starring role at Sao Jose, a fourth-division side from Porto Alegre, where former Brazil central defender Roque Junior started out.

Domestic league titles are Santin's speciality, inspiring Kalmar to the Allsvenskan crown in 2005 and twice doing the same with Copenhagen in the past two seasons.

FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Juan Mata

When Andres scored we started running towards the corner. I got there, I jumped on top, we all fell down…it was incredible

Juan Mata

The Valencia midfielder talks about being part of the Spain squad that won the World Cup for the first time in South Africa

Style setters

SO, JUAN MATA, world champion at 22. Not bad, eh?
Yes, it's pretty good! I never imagined that I would be a world champion and still less at my age. It's lovely. There was a lot of competition, a lot of very good players who had been playing for a long time that didn't make the squad, so until the moment that you see your name in the final squad list you never know. I was confident: I had been in the squad since the Confederations Cup the previous summer. But until they call you...

You weren't part of the Euro 2008 squad, so the World Cup itself must have been a new experience. Was that hard?
I learnt what real pressure is, what a World Cup is like, how you live with the pressure. But I think I was able to handle that quite well. The atmosphere in the squad was very good, everyone looked after me. That's one of the secrets of the success.

Fifty days together is a long time. How did you kill the time?
As best you can. There is training, other games to watch, but it can drag. We played cards. A lot of the players took films with them. You spend a lot of time chatting about nothing in particular. There are some days when it's pressure and hassle but being my first World Cup it was enjoyable. I took books and DVDs. I'd read a bit before sleeping. I watched almost the whole series of *Entourage* and read John Carlin's book about Nelson Mandela. I also played a lot of ping-pong.

What are the images that stay with you from the World Cup?
First of all, the negative one: the first game, against Switzerland. There was so much expectation but it didn't happen for us. The group stage was extremely tense. The game against Chile was the hardest moment of all – we knew if we lost we would be out in the first phase. We were genuinely on edge; you could feel the tension. In a positive sense, there's the Germany game, when Carles Puyol scored. I can see it very clearly. But of course the best moment was when Andres [Iniesta] scored [in the Final]. That was an explosion.

Talk us through that 115th minute of the Final...
I was on the bench and as the attack built, we were getting up...we could see it coming, building, the expectation growing. The goal didn't come out of nowhere, it built. It was a culmination. When [Iniesta] scored, the first thing I did was look across to the linesman to see if he had lifted his flag, to make sure there was no offside. Then I looked up at the scoreboard and saw "115m, 1-0". We started running towards the corner. I don't know how long I took to get there but I was flat out. I'm not sure if it was [David] Silva grabbing hold of me...I got there, I jumped on top, we all fell down. It was incredible.

The last five minutes must have been strange. Iniesta's goal was the winner and everyone celebrated as such. But you still had to hold on...
It seemed very long. So long! On the bench, we were so tense. We were trying to pressure the fourth official to make sure that he didn't add on too much time. We tried to encourage the team because by then they were destroyed physically. The tiniest little thing could ruin it for us and they were very, very tired. Everything comes together: the tension, the nerves, the tiredness, the emotion. Hardly any of us could sit down. Thinking about the chances that [Arjen] Robben had, the saves from [Iker] Casillas – it's all going round in your head. Those final minutes were torture.

Iniesta celebrated by sprinting to the corner. Did you want to scream at him to conserve his energy?
Yeah, but I don't think he knew what he was doing. It was a moment of euphoria and in those moments you go mad.

How quickly were you aware of what you had done?
At that stage we weren't really conscious of it. You know you've won the World Cup. You're lifting a trophy you've seen lifted on the television before. You picture Maradona, Matthaus and Zidane. But you don't know just how big it is. I first realised when we came back and I saw Madrid from the top of the bus.

Spain will talk about that team for years to come...
The fact that it was the first one makes a huge difference, it makes this more significant. Brazil and Argentina have won it before; with Spain it felt like we'd never win anything and for us to feel like we're part of the team that broke the run and changed history is wonderful. No matter what happens in the future this can never be taken away from us. My friends say to me: "If you lose a game, no worries – you're a world champion."

In competitive terms is that a risk?
In my case, no. I'm only 22. It doesn't take any motivation away from me. It makes me want to live it again.

Did you have to wait until the Final before you thought Spain would win the World Cup?
There was a moment, against Paraguay. We missed a penalty, they missed a penalty, and then [David] Villa scored a goal in which the ball went in off both posts. That's when you think: "Maybe luck is on our side after all. Things are coming off for us." From the knockout games onwards, every match was 1-0 and it seemed everything was coming up heads. We had to play Germany still, and Holland, but that day we started to think we could win the World Cup.

Did the lack of goals worry you?
It's not easy to score a lot of goals, especially in a World Cup. In the majority of the games the opposition sat deep. And when we got the goal the match became ours because we tended to have the possession. The first goal changes everything: the team feels liberated, relaxed and the opposition is obliged to open up and leave you space. At the same time, we knew that one goal was enough if we could control the game. But not all the games were the same; there were ones when we missed a lot of chances, others where we didn't have many.

There were some who thought Spain were boring...
Maybe we weren't quite so sparkling as during the qualification or during Euro 2008, but the style was the same and I think it's a style that's good to watch too. Spain's style is Xavi's style, Iniesta's style, Xabi Alonso's style – players who feel comfortable on the ball, who like to maintain possession.

With possession comes control...
Exactly. You can see the other side getting desperate. They run and run for very little of the ball. That wears them down bit by bit and fills you with confidence. And that gives you more chances to win. You can never lose your philosophy – and we were faithful to that. The most important thing Spain won by winning the World Cup was an idea, an identity. In the past people talked about the *Furia Roja* [red fury] because of the fight, the spirit, the guts, power and bravery. Now, it is all about touch and technique.

Interview by Sid Lowe

FACE TO FACE

Interviews with football's biggest names

Jose Manuel De la Torre

Belonging to the national side means being in an exclusive club and we must all be aware that always requires extra effort

Jose Manuel De la Torre

Mexico's new coach has taken on the "hottest job in football"

Fired up

SOME CALL the Mexico coaching job "the hottest in the whole world". Are you aware of the amount of pressure you're going to have on your shoulders?
Look, I already have some grey hairs but that comes with age. I really do not think it will be too much pressure, it comes with the job. I think the best way to ease it is by being responsible, by planning well, and thus by getting results. The best way to achieve this is to have a solid group and to properly prepare your players for the challenges ahead.

Your predecessor, Javier Aguirre, was widely criticised for his tactical choices, but also for his handling of the players. What is your philosophy?
Before football, we talk about people. The human factor is what leads you to have a good relationship with the players. We can all make mistakes in sport, but what you can't do is stain the national shirt with your actions outside the pitch. We all must be aware that belonging to the national side means to be in an exclusive club, and being in one of those always requires an extra effort.

Has that part been what's missing in the past?
I can't really tell as I wasn't there. But there is a phrase that I have repeated ever since I joined *El Tri* which is "being good is the main enemy of being the best", because that leads to conformity. Being the best always comes at a price and to be an international you have to pay that price. Everyone who will be part of the team has to be very aware of the responsibilities he carries with him, in every aspect. His behaviour, the commercial side, the relationship with the media and, of course, to keep the good performances on the pitch.

Talking about the commercial side, the players have also been strongly criticised for doing one-too-many ads...
It comes with the job. It would be ridiculous not to reckon that it is part of the life of the 21st-century footballer, but there is a time for everything. What matters the most is their performance on the pitch; for the rest we need to find the specific time, but you can always find space for everything.

Mexico have many players in Europe's top leagues – more than ever before – but some of them are struggling for playing time. Do you see that as a handicap?
It's always good to have your best players in the strongest possible competitions, but it's even more important that they can compete and are active in them. The only way to measure how good they are is whether they are on the pitch. All the training during the week must be reflected somewhere, otherwise it's complicated for me to assess them. As I said, the national-team players must be the best the country can offer, regardless of where they play their club football. They have to perform week in, week out.

So is it black or white, or are there shades of grey in your attitude to selection?
Look, there are some players whose hierarchy you have to respect and it's not good to be radical in any sense, but to perform at the best level you need players who are in good form, and you can only acquire it by playing.

If you had to choose, would you prefer your team to play like Real Madrid or Barcelona?
It's not that easy. Usually a team plays according to the qualities of the players, but I must say that in Mexico we have an advantage, which is that the players are very adept tactically. The Mexican footballer easily adapts to different systems. Then it depends on the intelligence of the coach to extract the most out of them under different circumstances.

Can you expand a little about the qualities of Mexican players?
Mexico has a good level of football which is improving every day. We may not be the quickest, but there is more pace in Mexican football every day. We're neither the tallest or strongest, but there has been significant progress. So, if we form a good group of young people with great disposition we can have a chance. There are endless stories of teams with big stars not working well together and bowing out of tournaments in the early rounds. That is something that shouldn't happen to us.

Mexico play most of their matches on American soil, even outside the worldwide international dates. The fans have strongly criticised that habit as they feel it's only for commercial reasons. Will that continue during your tenure?
It's always good to play as many matches as possible, but you have to give them a clear target. On FIFA dates we must have our full squad, and in other circumstances we will look for specific goals to extract the maximum benefit. And let's be clear: we won't only play in the United States – we will play in Europe and South America when the need arises. We will have to see what is best for the team and under which circumstances. There will be careful planning, no doubt about it.

Interview by Martin del Palacio Langer

Mexican abroad...Javier Hernandez is at Manchester United

ITALY

Diego FABBRINI

One bright hope on the *Azzurri* horizon

AT THE END of a disappointing closing half of 2010 for Italian football, Empoli's 20-year-old attacking midfielder looks to be just about the only feel-good story currently doing the rounds. Since that heady May night in Madrid, when multi-national (and not very Italian) Internazionale did the nation proud by winning the Champions League Final against Bayern Munich, little has gone right.

Firstly, there was that miserable first-round World Cup elimination in South Africa which, to some extent, was not a total surprise. But then came the failure of the *Azzurrini* to qualify for this summer's European Under-21 Championship in Denmark, missing out on the London 2012 Olympic Games in the process.

There was a time when the Italy Under-21 side were always favourites to win the European title, having lifted the trophy five times between 1992 and 2004. But not anymore.

Having beaten Belarus 2-0 in the first leg of their play-off in early October, Pierluigi Casiraghi's side looked to be well on their way to the finals. However, disaster struck in the fourth minute of the return leg in Borisov when Arsenal reserve goalkeeper Vito Mannone, reading the situation well, ran out of his area to beat the unmarked Maksim Skavysh to a long ball down the right wing. But just when he should have blasted the ball into the grandstand, Mannone opted to dribble and was immediately dispossessed, allowing Skavysh to provide the easiest of goals for Vladimir Yurchenko. Stunned by the nightmare start, the Italians conceded a second to Yurchenko two minutes later, before Oleg Veretilo scored a shock winner five minutes into the first-half of extra time.

Inevitably, the hapless Casiraghi paid for the elimination, leaving his post by mutual consent one week later. Yet amid the gloom and doom, one name shone brightly.

In four games for the Under-21s last autumn, Fabbrini showed that he is undoubtedly a player with a very bright future. As Italians like to say, such is his talent that he is "on first-name terms" with the ball.

He only has one Serie B season with Empoli behind him but already he looks destined for higher levels – so much so that the canny folk up at Udinese were quick to offer £1.75million (plus a couple of players) for a 50 per cent purchase of him last August.

For the time being, Fabbrini remains at Empoli, but he could soon be on the move to something bigger, with clubs such as Napoli, Genoa and Fiorentina all reportedly interested in him.

Paddy Agnew

FACT FILE

Club Empoli
Country Italy
Born July 31, 1990, in San Giuliano Terme

Yann M'VILA

Exclusion was blessing in disguise

A DISASTROUS SUMMER in South Africa, an infamous player mutiny and the subsequent appointment of Laurent Blanc as coach was bound to spark extensive changes for *Les Bleus* – and no player has benefitted more from the new regime than the defensive midfielder who made his international debut at the start of this season and has since become an immovable part of the national side.

Captain of the France Under-19s who reached the semi-finals of the 2009 European Championship, M'Vila was included in the preliminary 30-man squad for the World Cup, only to fail to make the final cut. However, the 20-year-old – whose father, Jean-Elvis, is from DR Congo was a decent player himself – should now be thankful that he did not go. The disgrace of others has been the making of him and Blanc must be privately astonished how effortlessly a rookie, with only one season of top-flight football under his belt, has settled in, catching the eye with his composure, tactical nous, solid distribution and trademark interceptions.

Once a schoolboy cross-country champion in his native Picardy, M'Vila surely has the endurance to go far.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Rennes
Country France
Born June 29, 1990
International debut August 2010, v Norway
International caps 5 (0 goals)

FRANCE

ARGENTINA

Mauro FORMICA

Old Boys' youngster causing a stir

"IF I WAS PRESIDENT of River Plate, I would buy Mauro Formica," said the club's veteran playmaker Ariel Ortega in July 2009. "Maybe he's not so well known because he plays for a provincial club, but he's a special player, with incredible quality."

Before rejoining River, Ortega spent two years in the city of Rosario with Newell's Old Boys, where he was team-mates with defender Lautaro Formica, who was one of four local footballing brothers.

Now with Huracan, Lautaro was part of Argentina's 2005 World Youth Cup-winning side, but as he made his way through the club's youth ranks there was more of a buzz at Newell's around his younger brother.

Mauro Formica's first-team debut came in September 2006, shortly after Ortega had left, and for the next two years he made sporadic appearances, even being tried out at wing-back. However, he began to come into his own in 2009 and since then the 22-year-old has been the brains of the Newell's attack, either operating behind two strikers as an orthodox number 10 or playing off the centre-forward.

"He's very dangerous," says Lautaro of his sibling. "You can't let him turn when he's close to goal. He finishes with a calm that I don't possess."

In May 2009, Mauro was called up by Diego Maradona for a friendly against Panama for which only home-based players were considered. Injury prevented his international debut, but his progress has been maintained. In the current domestic campaign he has been in fine form and, following Ortega's advice, River tried to sign him, only for the deal to collapse when agreement on a fee could not be reached.

Expect someone to rearrange one soon.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Newell's Old Boys
Country Argentina
Born April 4, 1988, in Rosario

Gylfi SIGURDSSON

GERMANY

Icelandic star kept under wraps

OVER-ENDOWED is the only way to portray the Icelandic attacking midfielder whose double helpings of vision, technique, drive, accuracy of shot and dead-ball talent could soon, if he continues to build on the fine start to his career, propel him into the European stratosphere and make him as famous in his native land as volcanoes, geysers and the singer Bjork.

Hyperbole? Not if you look at some of his exploits of the past 12 months – in particular the superb late winner he curled in from distance to help English second-tier side Reading beat West Bromwich Albion in last season's FA Cup.

Then there were the pair of long-range efforts he sent rocketing into the Scotland net in October's European Under-21 play-off, and the two wonderful free-kicks he scored for his new club Hoffenheim against Kaiserslautern and Mainz this term. Explosive and unforgettable all.

The smart money has to be on Sigurdsson developing into Iceland's best player of all time, better even than the current top man, Stoke City forward Eidur Gudjohnsen.

But one should nevertheless be careful of putting the cart before the horse. After five years in Reading's youth team, reserves and first XI, the current Bundesliga campaign is his first as a top-flight performer and it is fair to say he has yet to be thoroughly tested at the highest level.

Certainly Hoffenheim, who were sufficiently impressed to pay Reading £5.4million for the 21-year-old, are keen to ease him in gently. Six of his first seven appearances this term were as a substitute and, with the south-westerners riding high in the league, he will not find it easy to hold down a regular spot. Luck will have to be on his side and that essentially means injuries to team-mates.

Another potential problem for Sigurdsson in Germany is his position. Last season at Reading, where he managed an excellent return of 16 goals in the Championship, he lined up in his favourite spot behind a lone striker. However, Hoffenheim coach Ralf Rangnick – who was alerted to the young Icelander by his England-based son – is of the opinion that Sigurdsson offers far more when he plays on the left flank. Rangnick describes the new boy as a "frontier goer", a player born to flit between midfield and attack. If this is the case, surely he would carry more threat playing slap bang in the middle of the danger zone, the place where the Reykjavik-born talent can wreak an awful lot of damage.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Hoffenheim (Ger)
Country Iceland
Born September 9, 1989
Previous clubs Reading (Eng), Shrewsbury Town (Eng, loan), Crewe Alexandra (Eng, loan)
International debut May 2010, v Andorra
International caps 3 (0 goals)

FIVE TO FOLLOW: RENNES STARLETS

Nick Bidwell profiles young talent from the Ligue 1 high-fliers

Country France
Born February 8, 1990
Position Midfielder

Yacine BRAHIMI

ACCORDING to international midfielder Yann M'Vila, Brahimi is nothing less than a mixture of Zidane and Ronaldinho. "He is unique," gushes M'Vila of his team-mate.

Explosive and elusive behind the strikers, Brahimi was at the national academy in Clairefontaine before joining the Rennes youth programme at the age of 16. He was sent on loan last season to second division Clermont, where he scored eight goals and earned much praise from coach Michel Der Zakarian for "learning how to ally effectiveness with virtuosity".

Country France
Born January 8, 1988
Position Forward

Jires KEMBO EKOKO

WITH top-ranking forwards Jimmy Briand, Ismael Bangoura, Asamoah Gyan and Moussa Sow leaving in the close season, it looked perilous for Rennes. But thanks to the skills and incisiveness of "Kembinho", the exodus has not had the devastating effect many feared.

Born in DR Congo but brought up in the Paris suburbs, he earned a spot at Clairefontaine and moved to Rennes in 2004. A French citizen for two years and a regular in the France Under-21 side, he is the son of Jean Kembo, who played for Zaire at the 1974 World Cup.

Country France
Born October 28, 1989
Position Defender

Kevin THEOPHILE-CATHERINE

THE 21-year-old from the Breton town of Saint Brieuc was seen as the club's third-choice right-back last summer, but when first-choice left-back Samuel Souprayen was injured in pre-season, Theophile-Catherine was parachuted into the line-up and has proved a revelation.

In his second campaign as a professional, this most discreet of characters has transformed into a gladiator on the field, and is athletic, powerful and quick. Coach Frederic Antonetti believes he will develop into a fine centre-back in the future.

Country France
Born April 15, 1986
Position Midfielder

Sylvain MARVEAUX

CONSIDERED one of the most exciting prospects in Ligue 1, this home-grown Breton is a technically gifted and an electrifying presence on the left side of midfield, with his playing style compared to that of Chelsea's Florent Malouda.

After making his debut for Rennes in 2006, his early days as a pro were largely spent in the treatment room, but now free of injury his performance levels have gone through the roof, putting him on the radar of several leading European sides. Elder brother Joris is a utility player with Montpellier.

Country France
Born July 3, 1986
Position Midfielder

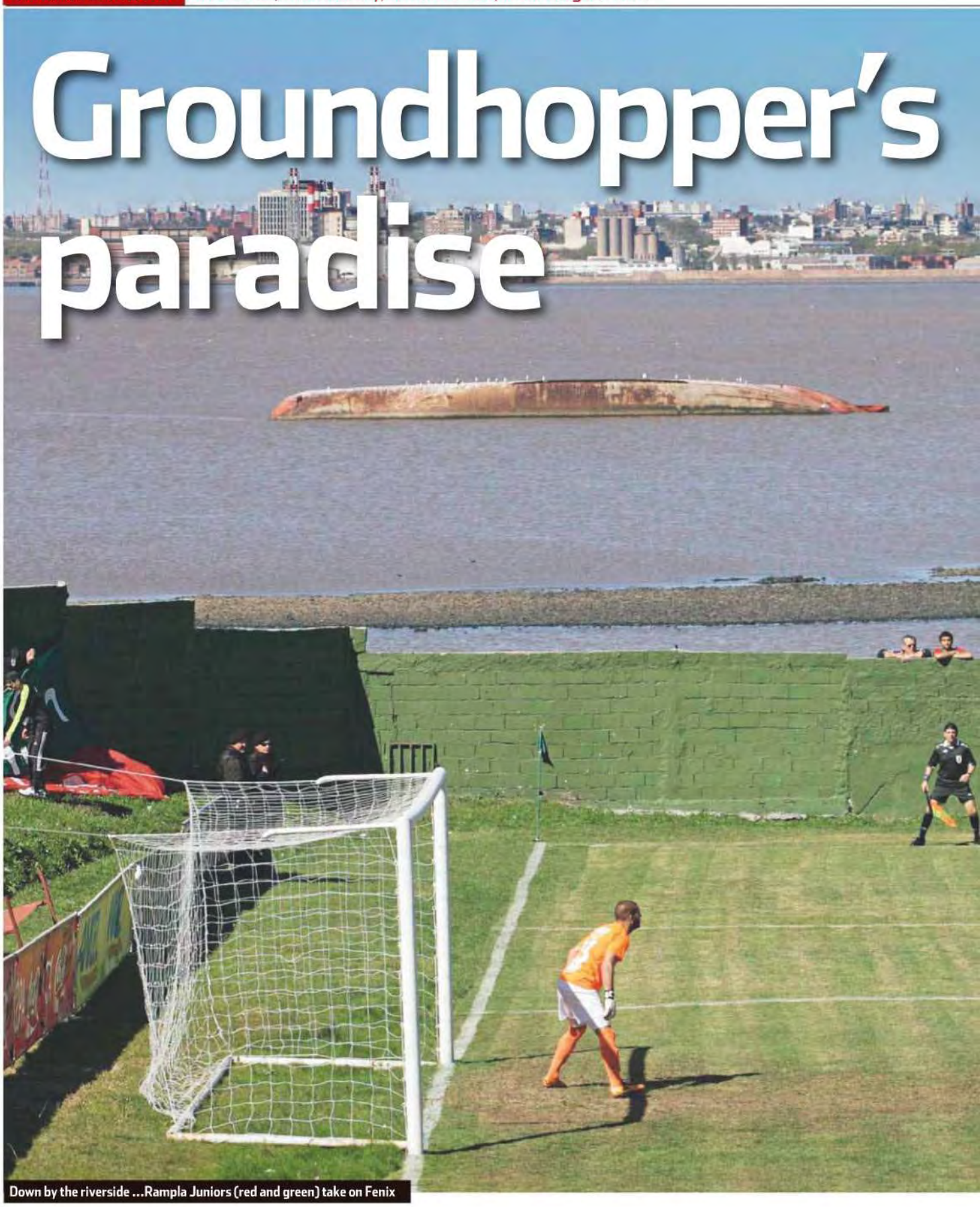
Romain DANZE

IMMENSELY versatile and equally proficient as a full-back, on the right wing or in midfield. Before this season his lot was that of the archetypal 12th man, ever ready to step in for an injured colleague. But with Rod Fanni in conflict with the club's hierarchy, Danze has taken over the right-back slot.

With Rennes since the age of 15, his strengths are his consistency, diligence and level-headedness – attributes which induced Antonetti to hand him the captain's armband this autumn when Kader Mangane was injured.

MONTEVIDEO The clubs, the history, what to see, how to get there

Groundhopper's paradise



Down by the riverside ...Rampla Juniors (red and green) take on Fenix

Peterjon Cresswell visits a city that is home to 15 of its country's 16 top-flight clubs

THE CAPITAL OF Uruguay will forever hold a unique place in football lore for staging the first World Cup in 1930. Sitting across the River Plate from Buenos Aires, Montevideo was chosen as the host city after pledging to pay all the teams' travelling expenses and promising to build a new national stadium, the Centenario, to celebrate the centenary of the Uruguayan constitution.

At the time Uruguay were the world's top national side – having won the Olympic titles of 1924 and 1928 – and on July 30, 1930, more than 90,000 spectators, including many from across the river, were packed into the ground hours before kick-off for the Final. The hosts, who trailed their Argentinian neighbours at half-time, scored three second-half goals to win 4-2.

However, the history of football in the city began long before then, with the great rivalry between Nacional and the forerunners of Penarol established as early as 1900.

Penarol emerged from the Central Uruguay Railway Cricket Club (CURCC), the sports club of the local British railway company, who were founded in September 1891. Taking their gold-and-black colours from railway signs, the club won several unofficial early national titles before administrative problems eventually led to the breakaway formation of Penarol, the name of the suburb where CURCC were originally based. By 1916, the club had its own ground, Las Acacias (later renamed the Estadio Contador Damiani), the stands of which were moved to the Estadio Pocitos – Penarol's home for most of the 1920s and early 1930s, and the venue for the first World Cup match, between France and Mexico – and then returned to the original location when the latter was demolished.

Nacional were founded in 1899, following a merger between Uruguay Atletica Club and Montevideo Football Club. Shortly after forming, they moved into the sports ground

A first...the Centenario hosts the 1930 World Cup Final

in the Parque Central in La Blanqueada, which was the de facto national stadium until the Centenario opened in 1930.

The first official meeting between Penarol (*La Aurinegros*) and Nacional (*La Alba*) was in December 1913 and the two rivals went on to dominate the Uruguayan game.

Nacional supplied the biggest names to the country's 1930 World Cup-winning side, with Hector Scarone, Pedro Cea and Hector Castro all scoring during the finals. Right-half Jose Andrade, who played for both Penarol and Nacional, also appeared in the Final, dying in poverty shortly after his nephew, Victor Andrade, a Penarol man, lifted the 1950 World Cup.

Goalscoring heroes

Juan Alberto Schiaffino and Alcides Ghiggia, the goalscoring heroes in the 1950 Final, were also *Aurinegros*, but it was Penarol who claimed the country's first major continental club trophy, winning the first Libertadores Cup in 1960 and retaining it the following season. They also picked up the Intercontinental Cup against Europe's best, Benfica, in 1961.

Alberto Spencer, Pedro Rocha and Luis Cubilla were the big names who put Penarol on the world stage, though Cubilla would later lift Nacional's first Intercontinental Cup, in 1971. With Fernando Morena and Ruben Paz at Penarol, and Hugo De Leon and Waldemar Victorino at Nacional, the big two were still winning world club titles well into the 1980s. And even though their ability to compete against foreign sides has diminished, they still rule the roost at home. Of the 78 championships since the professional era began in 1932, they have won 68 between them – Penarol 37, Nacional 31. The 10 other titles have also gone to teams from Montevideo, with December's apertura champions Defensor Sporting winning four, Danubio three, and one each for Bella Vista, Central Espanol and Progresso (who are now in the second tier). Back in the amateur days, capital clubs River Plate, Montevideo Wanderers and Rampla Juniors were also national champions, but there is only one clash that matters.

From controversies such as the physio's kit bag keeping the ball in play to allow Penarol to score in 1934 and Nacional's 6-0 triumph of 1941, to the heart-stopping moments of Penarol beating Nacional on penalties for the 1986 title and the madness of 22 red cards being dished out in 1990, there really is only one *superclasico* in Montevideo. ●

"There is only one Montevideo clash that matters"

No holds barred...Nacional v Penarol

THE STADIUMS

MONTEVIDEO SURVIVAL GUIDE

A vibrant and cultured city

● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT
Montevideo's main Carrasco International Airport is 12 miles from the city centre. A taxi into the city should cost around $15. Buses operate in town.

● HOTELS
The Gran Hotel America Montevideo (Rio Negro 1330, +598 2902 0392, $60) and the Punta Trouville Suites Hotel (Francisco Vidal 726, +598, 2712 0903, www.puntatrouville.com.uy, $150) are near the Centenario.

● EATING & DRINKING
Parrillas serving hefty steaks typify the local dining experience. The Shannon Irish Pub (Mitre 1318) is a handy meeting spot in the old city centre.

● MATCH DAY
Tickets for all matches are available from Abitab outlets (www.abitab.com.uy).

1 ESTADIO CENTENARIO
Penarol's 65,000-capacity stadium also hosts Uruguay internationals and the big Nacional games.

4 ESTADIO LUIS TROCCOLI
Cerro's home, built in the 1960s, holds up to 25,000 people.

7 PARQUE ALFREDO VICTOR VIERA
Inaugurated in 1933, Wanderers' home holds 12,000.

10 ESTADIO LUIS FRANZINI
Defensor Sporting's stadium has a capacity of 8,000.

13 PARQUE LUIZ MENDEZ PIANA
Miramar Misiones' home ground holds 6,000.

2 ESTADIO GRAN PARQUE CENTRAL
Built 110 years ago, Nacional's home arena is set to increase its capacity from 25,000 to 37,000.

5 ESTADIO BELVEDERE
Liverpool's 10,000-capacity stadium was built just over a century ago.

8 PARQUE FEDERICO OMAR SAROLDI
River Plate's 10,000-capacity ground is named after a keeper who died in a game.

11 PARQUE PALERMO
Central Espanol's home ground holds up to 6,500.

14 ESTADIO PARQUE CAPURRO
Fenix's home ground can hold up to 10,000 people.

3 ESTADIO OLIMPICO
Home to Rampla Juniors, this stadium – which was built in 1923 – has a capacity of 10,000.

6 ESTADIO JOSE NASAZZI
Bella Vista's modest 15,000-capacity ground is named after the captain of the 1930 World Cup-winning side.

9 JARDINES DEL HIPODROMO
Renovated in 1997, Danubio's ground has a capacity of 18,000.

12 ESTADIO VICTOR DELLA VALLE
Capable of holding 6,000 and home to El Tanque Sisley.

15 PARQUE OSVALDO ROBERTO
Named after the founder of the club, Racing's ground holds 8,000.

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WORLD SERVICE

THE ULTIMATE GLOBAL NEWS AND RESULTS SECTION

Frozen out

A late equaliser by Juventus striker Vincenzo Iaquinta in Poznan was still not enough to prevent the Italian side from going out of the Europa League at the group stage, following their 1-1 draw away to Lech of Poland. More information, page 103

INTERNATIONALS

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Hero...Messi

ARGENTINA
Messi ends long wait
Sergio Batista celebrated his confirmation as national coach by overseeing Argentina's first victory over Brazil in six attempts. Lionel Messi scored the winner in Doha.

AUSTRALIA
Champ makes debut
Asian Champions League winner Sasa Ognenovski of Seongnam Ilhwa made his international debut for the Socceroos alongside Lucas Neill, but the 31-year-old central defender was replaced during the second half after an unconvincing performance in which the reigning African champions Egypt won 3-0.

5 years since Argentina last beat their arch-rivals Brazil

BELGIUM
Youngster on target
Anderlecht's 17-year-old Romelu Lukaku scored twice in the 2-0 win away to Russia to become the national team's youngest scorer for 50 years.

BOTSWANA
Tunisia beaten again
The Zebras moved a step closer to reaching the African Nations Cup finals for the first time with a 1-0 win over Tunisia in Gaborone.

South Africa-based striker Jerome Ramatlhakwane of Santos Cape Town scored the only goal of the game to ensure Botswana completed a double over the Carthage

RESULTS

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Group E
Nov 17 - Helsinki
Finland 8 (Vayrynen 39, Hamalainen 49, 67, Forssell 51, 59, 78, Litmanen pen 71, Porokara 73)
San Marino 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,192. **Ref:** Matejek (Cze)
Finland: Fredrikson - Pasanen, Moisander, Lampi, Vayrynen, Sjolund (Litmanen 46), Heikkinen, Hamalainen (Porokara 70), R Eremenko, A Eremenko (Kuqi 80), Forssell.
San Marino: A Simoncini - F Vitaioli (Vannucci 72), Alessandro Della Valle, Coppini, Berretti (Alex Della Valle 67), Cervellini, Bugli, M Vitaioli, Selva, Montagna (Manuel Marani 79), Albani.

Group F
Nov 17 - Zagreb
Croatia 3 (Kranjcar 19, 42, Kalinic 81)
Malta 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Gomes (Por)
Croatia: Runje - Corluka, Schildenfeld, Dujmovic, Srna, Rakitic (Ilicevic 69), Pranjic, Modric, Kranjcar, Eduardo (Mandzukic 78), Petric (Kalinic 61).
Malta: Hogg - Caruana, Briffa, S Bajada, Sciberras (P Fenech 88), Pace, Hutchinson, Grima, Bogdanovic (Sammut 82), Schembri (R Fenech 70), M Mifsud.

● *See pages 87-88 for Euro 2012 qualifying tables and fixtures*

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Group K
Nov 17 - Gaborone
Botswana 1 (Ramatlhakwane 45)
Tunisia 0
HT: 1-0
Botswana: Marumo - Letsholathebe, Ohilwe, Motlhabankwe, Gabonamong (Moloi 79), Mongala, Nato, Motsepe, Mogorosi, Selolwane (Thuma 77), Ramatlhakwane.
Tunisia: Mathlouthi - Jemal, Saidi, Souissi, Boussaidi, Traoui, Dhaouadi (Mouihbi 53), Yahia, Ben Khalfallah, Korbi (Darragi 46), Akaichi (Khelifa 78).

Nov 17 - Lome
Togo 0
Chad 0
Togo: Tchagouni - Gafar, Nibombe, Akakpo, Morou, Amewou, Boukari, Mani, Salifou, J Ayite, Aloenouvo.

● *See pages 88-89 for 2012 African Nations Cup qualifying tables and fixtures*

CARIBBEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

2nd round
Group E*

CARIBBEAN CH'SHIP – 2ND RND: GP E* – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadeloupe	3	3	0	0	8	3	9
Grenada	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
St Kitts & N	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Puerto Rico	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

Group F*
In Marabella, Trinidad

Nov 2
Haiti 0
Guyana 0
Ref: Taylor (Bar)
Haiti: Ceus - Jerome (W Guerrier 44), P Guerrier, Milord, Versailles, Norde (Jean 79), Cadet (Charles 65), Saint-Preux, Constant, Milien, Rubin.
Guyana: Williams - Lowe, Nurse, Newton, Pollard, Cameron (Ali 76), Peters, D Jacobs, Bourne, Abrams (Beveney 69), Millington (Gilkes 82).
Sent off: Peters 76min.

Nov 2
Trinidad & Tobago 6 (Jorsling 3, 35, 59, K Baptiste 57, 66, Hector 90)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 2 (S Samuel 21, Stewart 45)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Peterkin (Jam)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - J Jones, Cyrus, Cupid, James, Noel (Hector 64), Leon, Peltier (Daniel 70), Jagdeosingh, Gay (K Baptiste 52), Jorsling.
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Sandy - Richards, W Charles, Nero, Richardson, Bowens, Hamlett (Farrell 78), Damal Francis (J George 62), S Samuel (Cuffy 73), Stewart, M Samuel.

Nov 4
St Vincent & The Grenadines 1 (S Samuel 64)
Haiti 3 (Norde 45, Saint-Preux 62, Charles 83)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Lynch - Richards, W Charles, Hamlett (Balcombe 46), Richardson, S Samuel, Stewart, E George, Bowens, M Samuel (N George 55), McDowall (Nero 46).
Haiti: Ceus - P Guerrier, Milord, Vorbe (Saint-Preux 61), Norde, Charles, Constant (Jean 80), Clairssainvil, W Guerrier (Beauge 61), Milien, Rubin.

Nov 4
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (Peltier 34, Jorsling 42)
Guyana 1 (Beveney 78)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Legister (Jam)
Trinidad & Tobago: J M Williams - Cyrus, Marshall, James, J Jones (Wolfe 58), Peltier (Daniel 67), Noel, Leon (Theobald 52), Molino, Gay, Jorsling.
Guyana: Williams - Lowe, Nurse, Moore, Newton, Rodrigues, Cameron (Ali 61), D Jacobs (Beveney 75), Bourne, Abrams, Millington.

Nov 6
Guyana 2 (Millington 57, Cameron 81)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Taylor (Bar)
Guyana: Williams - Lowe, Moore, Newton, Cameron, Rodrigues, Nurse (Pollard 32), Bourne, Peters, Abrams (Beveney 58), Millington (Ali 58).
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Lynch - Richards (Balcombe 90), W Charles, Nero, Richardson, N George (Bowens 79), Farrell, Damal Francis, E George (J George 46), Stewart, M Samuel.

Nov 6
Trinidad & Tobago 4 (Hector 4, 33, Jorsling 7, K Baptiste 29)
Haiti 0
HT: 4-0. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - Cupid, Marshall, Wolfe, James, Daniel (Jadeosingh 46), Theobald, Hector, Molino, K Baptiste, Jorsling (Winchester 46).
Haiti: Ceus - Milord, Jerome, Norde, Charles, Constant, Clairssainvil, W Guerrier, Milien (Saint-Preux 34), Rubin, Jean (Vorbe 71).

CARIBBEAN CH'SHIP – 2ND RND: GP F* – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trinidad & Tob	3	3	0	0	12	3	9
Guyana	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Haiti	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
St Vincent & G	3	0	0	3	3	11	0

Group G*
In St John's, Antigua

Nov 10
Antigua & Barbuda 2 (Burton 17, Cochrane 64)
Surinam 1 (Emanuelson 33)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Morrison (Jam)
Antigua & Barbuda: DeCastro - Parker, Carr, Dublin, Mack (R Gregory 80), Leigertwood, A Thomas (Griffith 72), Cochrane, G Gregory (Skepple 88), Burton, Byers.
Surinam: Huiswood - Garden, Felter, Abauna, Limon (Rijters 81), Kwasie (Waal 72), Emanuelson, Baneti (Van Dijk 68), Ives Vlijter, Rijssel, Christoph.

Nov 10
Cuba 4 (Coroneaux 9, R Fernandez 20, Y Colome 27, Hernandez 35)
Dominica 2 (K Benjamin 11, 87)
HT: 4-1. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)
Cuba: Castellanos - Marquez, R Fernandez (Dranguet 88), Y Colome, J Colome, Urqelles, Francisco, Coroneaux (Duarte 74), S Fernandez (Quesada 77), Cervantes, Hernandez.
Dominica: Oscar - Bernard (McKenzie 55), Derrick, Christopher, Thomas, Elizee (Dangleben 46), C Bertrand, R Bertrand (George 30), Austrie, Langlais, K Benjamin.

Nov 12
Antigua & Barbuda 0
Dominica 0
Ref: Purser (Jam)
Antigua & Barbuda: DeCastro - Parker, Carr, Dublin, Mack, Leigertwood, Christian (J Thomas 56), Cochrane, G Gregory (Skepple 49), Burton, Byers.
Dominica: Prince - Bernard, Derrick, Christopher, Thomas, Jervier, C Bertrand, George (R Bertrand 56), Austrie, Langlais (Dangleben 68; Alleyne 90), K Benjamin.

Nov 12
Surinam 3 (Christoph 8, Rijssel 50, Garden 80)
Cuba 3 (Coroneaux 45, Cervantes 65, Ramos 88)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Surinam: Huiswood - Garden, Felter, Abauna, Limon (Rigters 90), Waal (Kwasie 38), Emanuelson, Van Dijk, Ives Vlijter (Baneti 74), Rijssel, Christoph.
Cuba: Castellanos - Marquez, R Fernandez, Y Colome, J Colome, Urqelles, Francisco, Coroneaux (Duarte 60), S Fernandez, Cervantes (Ramos 79), Hernandez (Linares 60).

Nov 14
Dominica 0
Surinam 5 (Kwasie 45, Ives Vlijter 45+1, Emanuelson 56, Limon 75, Rijssel pen 88)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)
Dominica: Prince (Oscar 58) - Bernard, Derrick, Christopher (George 72), Thomas, Jervier (Alleyne 65), C Bertrand, Joseph, Austrie, Langlais, K Benjamin.
Surinam: Huiswood - Garden, Felter, Abauna, Limon, Kwasie (Moennoe 88), Emanuelson, Van Dijk, Ives Vlijter (Baneti 77), Rijssel (Rigters 90), Christoph.

Nov 14
Antigua & Barbuda 0
Cuba 0
Ref: Campbell (Jam)
Antigua & Barbuda: DeCastro - Parker, Carr, Dublin, Mack, Leigertwood, J Thomas (G Gregory 75), Cochrane, A Thomas, Burton (Griffith 90), Byers (Skepple 81).
Cuba: O Molina - Marquez, R Fernandez, Dranguet, J Colome, Urqelles, Francisco, Coroneaux, S Fernandez (Ramos 82), Duarte (Linares 70), Hernandez (Quesada 90).

CARIBBEAN CH'SHIP – 2ND RND: GP G* – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cuba	3	1	2	0	7	5	5
Antigua & Bda	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Surinam	3	1	1	1	9	5	4
Dominica	3	0	1	2	2	9	1

The top two in each of the three 2nd round groups qualified for the final round, to which Jamaica and Martinique qualified automatically
**The three 2nd round groups were named sequentially, after the 1st round groups were named A, B, C and D*

Eagles and maintained their unbeaten run in qualifying.

CHILE

Bielsa bids goodbye

Marcelo Bielsa said farewell as national boss when he guided Chile to a 2-0 win against World Cup semi-finalists Uruguay in Santiago.

Bielsa resigned after Harold Mayne-Nicholls was replaced as president of the Chilean FA by Jorge Segovia, and many of the 45,000 fans at the game wore black T-shirts in protest at the coach's departure, for which they blame Segovia.

ENGLAND

First home defeat

Fabio Capello lost at Wembley for the first time in his two-and-a-half years as England manager with the 2-1 friendly loss to France.

Newcastle United striker Andy Carroll, Sunderland midfielder Jordan Henderson and forward Jay Bothroyd of second-tier club Cardiff City all made their international debuts for the home side.

Triple...Forssell

FINLAND

Record victory

Mikael Forssell scored a hat-trick as Finland recorded their biggest-ever win in competitive football, beating San Marino 8-0.

Although they only had Mika Vayrynen's goal to show for their first-half efforts, Kasper Hamalainen (twice) and subs Roni Porokara and Jari Litmanen, 39, joined Forssell on the scoresheet after the break as Finland bettered their 7-1 success against Luxembourg during World Cup qualifying in 1976.

VFF CUP

(Vietnamese Football Federation)

In Hanoi, Vietnam

Nov 2
Singapore 1 (Duric 41)
North Korea 2 (Ri Myong-jun 81, Al Il-bom 90+2)
HT: 1-0

Nov 2
Vietnam 0
South Korea U-23 2 (Jung Woo-young 62, Kim Min-je 90)
HT: 0-0

Nov 4
South Korea U-23 1
North Korea 1

Nov 4
Vietnam 1 (Phan Van Tai Em 76)
Singapore 1 (Shi Jiayi 24)
HT: 0-1

Nov 6
Singapore 2 (Duric 44, 58)
South Korea U-23 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Bennett (Singapore)

Nov 6 - Hanoi
Vietnam 0
North Korea 2 (Myong Cha-hyon 55, Ri Jin-hyok 56)
HT: 0-0

VFF CUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
North Korea	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Singapore	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Sth Korea U-23	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Vietnam	3	0	1	2	1	5	1

FRIENDLIES

Sunday, November 7

Nov 7 - Aden
Yemen 2 (Al Nono 9, 11)
Uganda 2 (Sserumagga 32, Edema 90)
HT: 2-1

Wednesday, November 10

Nov 10 - Manama
Bahrain 0
Uganda 0

Nov 10 - Aden
Yemen 1 (Al Worafi 42)
North Korea 1 (Ri Chol-myong 2)
HT: 1-1

Thursday, November 11

Nov 11 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Iraq 2 (Mustafa Karim pen 17, Mahdi Karim 66)
India 0
HT: 1-0

Sunday, November 14

Nov 14 - Manama
Bahrain 0
Syria 2 (Al Zeno 48, Jaffal 78)
HT: 0-0

Nov 14 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Kuwait 9 (Al Sulaiman 20, Al Mutawa 25, 55, 66, 90, Al Ataiqi pen 29, F Al Enezi 51, Khalaf 56, H Al Enezi 75)
India 1 (Rafi 69)
HT: 3-0

Tuesday, November 16

Nov 16 - Lisbon
Cape Verde Islands 2 (Lito 6, Ronny 24)
Guinea-Bissau 1 (Toni og 27)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Ferreira (Por)
Cape Verde: Nelson Cruz - Josimar, Varela, Nando, Stopira (Joao Vicente 88), Toni, Babanco (Dario 59), Ronny, Odair (Heldon 69), Lito (Dady 69), Rian (Sidnei 78).
Guinea-Bissau: Jonas Mendes - Vladimir (Edson Correia 46), Banjai, Bruno Fernandes, Backar (Cande 66), Ednilson (Camara 84), Zezinho (Dionisio 58), Luciano Teixeira (Moia 46), Moreira, Bocundji (Abel Camara 71), Cicero.

Nov 16 - Amman
Jordan 0
Cyprus 0
Att: 3,500
Jordan: Sabah - Yaseen, Aqel, Al Salman (Hashhash 70), Fathi, Deeb, Abdulrahman, Abdelhalim (Haggi 81), Al Shaqran (Murjan 60), Al Saifi, Salim (Al Nawateer 67).
Cyprus: Georgallides (Kissas 54) - Poursaitidis, Elia (Aloneftis 73), Christou (Merkis 46), Charalambidis, Panagi, Michael, Satsias (Mitidis 64), Efrem, Solomou (Dobrasinovic 54), Christofi (Konstantinou 58).

Nov 16 - Dubai, UAE
Saudi Arabia 0
Uganda 0

Nov 16 - Aberdeen
Scotland 3 (Wilson 24, Commons 31, Mackie 45)
Faroe Islands 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 10,873. **Ref:** Van Boekel (Hol)
Scotland: Gordon (Bell 68) - Bardsley (Saunders 71), Crainey, G Caldwell, Wilson (Kenneth 61), D Fletcher (Bryson 68), Bannan, Adam (McArthur 55), Commons (Goodwillie 76), Mackie, Maloney.
Faroe Islands: Gunnar Nielsen - Naes, E Jacobsen, Gregersen, Davidsen, Udsen (Justinussen 86), Jann Petersen (Mouritsen 60), Lokin (E Hansen 78), Holst (Poulsen 56), Elttor, Edmundsson.

Wednesday, November 17

Nov 17 - Korce
Albania 0
Macedonia 0
Att: 10,000. **Ref:** Gocek (Tur)
Albania: Ujkani - Lila, Daliku, Vangjeli (Bakaj 55), Teli, Agolli (Vrapi 76), Muzaka (Hyka 57), Lala, Duro (Memushaj 63), Bulku (Vila 74), Salihi (Januzi 73).
Macedonia: Nuredinovski (Bogatinov 88) - Lazarevski (Todorovski 68), Sikov (Mojsov 64), I Mitreski, Lazevski, Gjurovski (Memedi 58), Gligorov, Sumulikoski, Trickovski (Ilijoski 66), Kirovski (Savic 62), Fetai.

Nov 17 - Doha, Qatar
Argentina 1 (Messi 90+1)
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Balideh (Qat)
Argentina: Romero - Zanetti, Pareja, Burdisso, Heinze, Banega, Mascherano, Pastore (D'Alessandro 69), Messi, Di Maria, Higuain (Lavezzi 46).
Brazil: Victor - Daniel Alves, Thiago Silva, David Luiz, Andre Santos, Lucas, Ramires (Jucilei 86), Elias, Ronaldinho (Douglas 73), Robinho, Neymar (Andre 77).

Nov 17 - Vienna
Austria 1 (Fuchs 67)
Greece 2 (Samaras 49, Fotakis 81)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,200. **Ref:** Kever (Swi)
Austria: Macho (Gratzei 46) - Klein, Prodl, Schiemer, Fuchs, Pehlivan (Scharner 69), Alaba, Kavlak (Janko 58), Junuzovic, Arnautovic (Jantscher 87), Maierhofer (Linz 69).
Greece: Tzorvas - Torosidis (Vyntra 46), Tzavellas, A Papadopoulos, Papastathopoulos, Katsouranis (Kafes 74), Karagounis (Makos 90+1), Kone (Fotakis 46), Samaras, Christodoulopoulos (Georgiadis 85), Salpigidis (Fetfatzidis 71).

Nov 17 - Sofia
Bulgaria 0
Serbia 1 (Zigic 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Avram (Rom)
Bulgaria: Mihaylov - Zanev, Milev, I Ivanov, Milanov (Bodurov 65), Yanev, Popov, M Petrov (Gadzhev 66), Genchev, Rangelov (Dimitrov 30), Bozhinov (Makriev 53).
Serbia: Jorgacevic - Ivanovic, Subotic, Vidic (Rajkovic 66), Kolarov, Ljajic (Ninkov 85), Petrovic (Radovanovic 46), Milijas (Trivunovic 66), Z Tosic, Miric (Sulejmani 74), Mrdja (Zigic 46).
Sent off: Zigic 90min.

Nov 17 - Mantes-la-Ville, France
Burkina Faso 2 (Pitroipa 35, Balima 84)
Guinea 1 (K Cisse 10)
HT: 1-1
Burkina Faso: Sa Traore - Derme, Zembre, M Tall, Gnanou (B Kone), Koffi (C Kabore), Rouamba (Guira), Pitroipa (I Ouedraogo), I Ouattara (Mandela), Yameogo, Bance.
Guinea: N Yattara - Ibrahima Bangoura, I Camara, D Balde, Kalabane, M Bah, Zayatte, Constant, Traore, K Cisse, I Yattara.

Nov 17 - Santiago
Chile 2 (Sanchez 38, Vidal 75)
Uruguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Chile: Bravo - Vidal, Ponce, Jara, Isla (Millar 77), Estrada (Carmona 65), Medel (Maldonado 90), M Gonzalez, Suazo (Paredes 61), Sanchez, Orellana (Morales 71).
Uruguay: Muslera - Victorino, M Pereira (Caceres 79), Fucile, Lugano, Arevalo (Ramirez 62), A Pereira (Eguren 62), Gargano, Suarez (C Rodriguez 46), Forlan (Abreu 79), Cavani. *Sent off: Gargano 41min.*

Nov 17 - Kunming
China 1 (Yang Xu 90+3)
Latvia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,500
China: Yang Zhi - Wang Qiang, Deng Zhuoxiang (Wang Song 68), Zhao Xuri (Li Chunyu 55), Zhang Linpeng, Yu Hanchao (Feng Renliang 46), Yu Hai, Yang Hao (Dai Lin 73), Rong Hao, Liu Jianye, Gao Lin (Yang Xu 46).
Latvia: Romanovs - Mihadjuks, Smirnovs, Zirnis, Krjauklis, Fertovs (Kovalovs 82), Lazdins (Dubra 90+3), Rafalskis (Astafjevs 71), Zigajevs (Bespalovs 90+1), Pereplotkins (Rugins 88), Turkovs (Kozlovs 77).

Nov 17 - Bogota
Colombia 1 (Nunez 72)
Peru 1 (Ramirez 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,900. **Ref:** Laverni (Arg)
Colombia: B Castillo - Valdez, Nunez, Otalvaro (Anchico 70), Gonzalez, Marrugo (Ibarbo 46), Chara, G Moreno (Pabon 65), Hernandez (Uribe 65), Viafara (Valencia 46), J Martinez (D Moreno 46).
Peru: Delgado - Vargas (Trujillo 74), Rabanal, Vilchez, Ramos, Guizasola, Sheput (Tragodara 58), Lobaton (Advincula 58), Ramirez (Cruzado 78), Ballon (Balbin 86), J Fernandez (Gonzalez-Vigil 67).

Nov 17 - Fort Lauderdale, USA
Costa Rica 0
Jamaica 0
Ref: Penso (USA)
Costa Rica: Navas - Duarte, Myrie (Guzman 66), Umana, Miller, Mora (Mena 46), Azofeifa, Barrantes (Ramirez 67), V Nunez (J Martinez 67), Ruiz, Madrigal (Urena 46).
Jamaica: Miller - Austin (Edwards 78), Thomas, J Taylor, A Reid, Francis (Morrison 69), Richards, Palmer (Woodbine 84), White (Orgill 69), Smith, Daley.

Nov 17 - Aarhus
Denmark 0
Czech Republic 0
Att: 9,184. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Denmark: Lindegaard - Mathias Jorgensen (Stadsgaard 46), Thomsen, Bjelland, Mtiliga, Martin Jorgensen (D Jensen 28), Christian Poulsen (Zimling 69), Kahlenberg (Andreasen 62), Rommedahl (Eriksen 76), Krohn-Dehli, Junker (M Rasmussen 46).
Czech Republic: Cech - Pospech (Limbersky 85), Suchy, Rajnoch, Kadlec (Pudil 85), Hubschman, Polak, Rosicky (Licka 46), Plasil (Petrzela 89), Rezek (Bednar 65), Necid (Hubnik 65).

Nov 17 - Quito
Ecuador 4 (Benitez 2, 4, W Ayovi pen 45+3, pen 47)
Venezuela 1 (Maldonado pen 48)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Chaibou (Ngr)
Ecuador: Banguera - Paredes (Checa 70), Campos, I Mina, W Ayovi (G Caicedo 88), Castillo, Quiroz, Arroyo (J Ayovi 68), Saritama, Rojas (Montero 54), Benitez (Guerrero 79).
Venezuela: Sanhouse - Romero, Perozo, Bustamante, Granados (Fuenmayor 78), Lucena, C Gonzalez (Di Giorgi 59), Seijas (Perez Greco 86), Guerra (Gomez 67), Moreno (Arismendi 71), Maldonado.

Debutant...Gotze

GERMANY

Gotze gets first cap

Borussia Dortmund midfielder Mario Gotze became the youngest player to represent Germany at full international level since 1954 when he came on as a substitute in the friendly against Sweden aged just 18 years and 167 days.

Dortmund left-back Marcel Schmelzer, 22, Mainz winger Lewis Holtby, 20, and Mainz striker Andre Schurrle, 20, also won their first caps in the goalless draw.

Joachim Low's side have arranged friendlies against Italy in February and, in a repeat of their World Cup third-place play-off, against Uruguay on May 29.

HAITI

Shock win in Doha

A goal from Jean Junior Monuma Constant secured a surprise 1-0 win for Haiti in a friendly away to Qatar – only their third win in two years.

Victory...Haiti (in blue)

HOLLAND

Five in a row

Klaas-Jan Huntelaar scored in his fifth consecutive international to give Holland a 1-0 win over Guus Hiddink's Turkey. However, the Schalke striker still has some way to go

Nov 17 - Cairo
Egypt 3 (Zaher 29, Gedo 60, Zidan pen 90)
Australia 0
HT: 1-0
Egypt: A W El Sayed (Sobhy 62) - Gomaa, Fathalla, Dewidar, Farag, Awad (Al Muhammadi 53), Salah, Fathy, Aboutraika (Zidan 58), Abdel Malek (Soliman 55), Zaher (Gedo 59; Mekki 75).
Australia: Schwarzer - Wilkshire (Valeri 89), Neill, Ognenovski (North 66), Carney, Culina, Jedinak, Holman (Vidosic 70), Emerton (Garcia 34), Cahill (McKay 80), McDonald.

Nov 17 - London
England 1 (Crouch 86)
France 2 (Benzema 16, Valbuena 55)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 85,495. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
England: Foster - Jagielka, Ferdinand (Richards 46), Lescott, Gibbs (Warnock 72), Henderson, Barry (A Young 46), Walcott (A Johnson 46), Gerrard (Crouch 85), Milner, Carroll (Bothroyd 72).
France: Lloris - Sagna (Reveillere 87), Rami, Mexes (Sakho 46), Abidal, Gourcuff (Hoarau 85), M'Vila, Nasri, Valbuena (A Diarra 68), Benzema (Remy 67), Malouda (Payet 77).

Nov 17 - Tallinn
Estonia 1 (Vassiljev pen 57)
Liechtenstein 1 (M Frick 35)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,909. **Ref:** Gvardis (Rus)
Estonia: Londak - Enar Jaager, Rahn, Stepanov, Sidorenkov, Vassiljev, Dmitrijev, Purje (Post 63), Kink (Luts 75), Kruglov (S Puri 61), Saag (Mosnikov 88).
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Oehri, R Buchel, Kaufmann, Rechsteiner, M Buchel, Wieser (Hanselmann 85), T Beck (Christen 86), M Frick, Burgmeier, D Hasler (Vogt 90+3).

Nov 17 - Kennesaw, USA
Guatemala 3 (Montepeque 23, Ramirez 29, 63)
Guyana 0
HT: 2-0
Guatemala: Molina - Flores, L Rodriguez, G Cabrera, E Gonzalez, Lopez, Leon, Velasquez, Romero, Ramirez, Montepeque.
Guyana: Lloyd (Carter 67) - Lowe, Pollard, Baker (Beresford 78), Newton, Cameron, Bourne, Rodrigues, D Jacobs, Peters (Brown 54), Ali (Nurse 41; Beaton 90).

Nov 17 - Amsterdam
Holland 1 (Huntelaar 52)
Turkey 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Holland: Steketenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen (Wisgerhof 46), Pieters, Lens (Van Persie 46), Maduro (Schaars 86), Sneijder (Janssen 46), Van der Vaart (Drenthe 80), Afellay, Huntelaar (Babel 86).
Turkey: Volkan Demirel - Gokhan Gonul, Serdar, Servet, Ismail, Burak (Mehmet Ekici 62), Nuri, Selcuk Inan (Yigit 90+1), Sabri (Engin 76), Hamit Altintop (Yekta 83), Umut (Kazim-Richards 62).

Nov 17 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 0
Paraguay 7 (Santa Cruz 5, 33, E Barreto 31, J Ortigoza 47, 55, M Riveros 74, C Riveros 90)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 6,250. **Ref:** Mohd Salleh (Mly)
Hong Kong: Zhang Chunhui (Tse Tak-him 46) - Sham Kwok-fai (Lam Ka-wai 76), Den Jinghuang (Ambassa 60), Poon Yiu-cheuk, Lee Chi-ho, Lo Kwan-yee, Leung Chun-pong (Cheng Lai-hin 76), Lee Hong-lim (Kwok Kin-pong 46), Chu Siu-kei (Lee Wai-lim 46), Bai He, Ye Jia.
Paraguay: Villar - Vera (Bartomeus 58), Da Silva, Alcaraz (Cabral 84), Torres, E Barreto (M Riveros 58), Molinas (C Ortiz 60), C Riveros, Camacho (J Ortigoza 46), Santa Cruz, Perez (Santander 82).

Nov 17 - Szekesfehervar
Hungary 2 (Priskin 61, Dzsudzsak 80)
Lithuania 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Nijhuis (Hol)
Hungary: Fulop - Liptak, Lazar (Vermes 73), Juhasz (Pinter 79), Elek (Varga 46), Czvitkovics (Hajnal 73), Laczko (Kadar 46), Koman, Dzsudzsak, Szalai, Rudolf (Priskin 46).
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Radavicius, Kijanskas, Klimavicius, Stankevicius, Galkevicius, Ivaskevicius, Pilibaitis (Eliosius 68), Novikovas (Jersovas 81), Semas (Velicka 58), Poskus (Fridrikas 46).

Nov 17 - Tel Aviv
Israel 3 (Damari 5, 14, Rafaelov 27)
Iceland 2 (Finnbogason 78, Sigthorsson 84)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 4,500
Israel: Aouate - Shpungin (Dgani 78), Gershon, Bondarv, Damari, A Cohen (Zahavi 70), Alberman, Rafaelov (Vermouth 53), Natcho (Dajani 65), Buzaglo (E Cohen 68), Barda (Sahar 60).
Iceland: Gunnleifsson (Magnusson 71) - B Saevarsson, Hreidarsson (O Skulason 46), Thorsteinsson, I Sigurdsson (Adalsteinsson 76), B Bjarnason (Vilhjalmsson 82), K O Sigurdsson (Fjoluson 57), E Jonsson, A E Gunnarsson, Finnbogason, Sigthorsson.

Nov 17 - Klagenfurt, Austria
Italy 1 (Marica og 82)
Romania 1 (Marica 34)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,436. **Ref:** Einwaller (Aut)
Italy: Viviano - Santon (Cassani 61), Ranocchia, Bonucci, Balzaretti, Aquilani, Ledesma (Pirlo 46), Mauri, Diamanti (De Rossi 46; Pazzini 78), Rossi (Gilardino 46), Balotelli (Quagliarella 61).
Romania: Pantilimon (Tatarusanu 46) - Rapa, Tamas, Chivu (Goian 16), Rat, Torje (Tanase 58), Ropotan (Alexa 80), Florescu, Deac (Ilie 90), Marica, Stancu.

Nov 17 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Kuwait 1 (M Al Enezi 67)
Iraq 1 (Younis 45)
HT: 0-1

Nov 17 - Tripoli
Libya 1 (Al Ghandour 69)
Niger 1 (Maazou 77)
No extra-time. **HT:** 0-0
Libya 4-1 on pens

Nov 17 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Algeria 0
Att: 7,033. **Ref:** Sippel (Ger)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Kintziger, Blaise, Hoffmann, Schnell, Kettenmeyer (Da Mota 46), Bettmer, Payal, C Leweck (Janisch 82), Mutsch, Joachim (Martino 64).
Algeria: M'Bolhi (Zemmamouche 87) - Mostefa (Meftah 69), Yahia, Medjani, Mesbah, Lemmouchia, Lacen (Metref 69), Boudebouz, Ziani (Aoudia 75), Djabou (Mesloub 46), Benyamina (Zerdab 80).

Nov 17 - Blantyre
Malawi 2 (F Banda 56, V Nyirenda 76)
Rwanda 1 (Birori 8)
HT: 0-1
Rwanda: Ndayishimiye - Niyonzima, Mutunzi, Gasana, Kapet, Sibomana, Mugiraneza, Ngabo, Iranzi, Kipson, Birori.

Nov 17 - Saint-Aubin-sur-Scie, France
Mali 3 (A Traore 49, M Maiga 54, N'Diaye pen 75)
DR Congo 1 (Diba 16)
HT: 0-1
Mali: Sissoko (S Diakite) - Cisse, Kante, Tamboura, Drissa Coulibaly, M Diarra (Sidi Keita), Doumbia (Souleymane Keita), S Yattabare (I Keita), A Traore, M Yattabare (M Maiga), N'Diaye.

Nov 17 - Podgorica
Montenegro 2 (Pejovic 62, Beciraj 73)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Stavrev (Mac)
Montenegro: M Bozovic (Blazic 46) - Pejovic (Cetkovic 76), Pavicevic (Savic 68), Batak, Basa, Fatic (Jovanovic 59), Vukcevic, Pekovic (D Bozovic 65), Kascelan, Djalovic (Beciraj 56), Damjanovic.
Azerbaijan: Agayev - Yunisoglu, Shukurov, Levin (V Huseynov 74), Allahverdiyev, E Mammadov (F Guliyev 46), Chertoganov (J Huseynov 66), Abishov, Amirguliyev (Guluzade 84), Nadirov, R Aliyev (Dzavadov 67).

Nov 17 - Maputo
Mozambique 1 (Isac Carvalho 90+2)
Zimbabwe 3 (Musona 40, Mushekwi 59, 87)
HT: 0-1

Nov 17 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 1 (Patterson pen 86)
Morocco 1 (Chamakh 55)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000
Northern Ireland: Tuffey (Blayney 46) - McGivern (Coates 62), A Hughes (McArdle 46), J Evans, Brunt (McQuoid 47), Barton, McGinn (Magennis 69), McCourt (O'Connor 46), Hodson, Gorman, Patterson.
Morocco: Lamyaghri - El Kaddouri, Benatia (Berrabeh 78), Soulaimani, Kantari, Hermach (El Ahmadi 89), Kharja, Chadli, Belhanda (Benzoukane 75), Hadji (El Zhar 80), Chamakh (El Arabi 71).

Nov 17 - Seeb
Oman 0
Belarus 4 (Martynovich 5, 11, V Hleb 35, Rodionov pen 57)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Al Amri (Sau)
Oman: Huwaidi - Suhail (Al Farsi 82), Rabee (Al Shimli 46), Al Dallami (Abdulkarim 82), Al Alaoui, Rabea, Mubarak, Hadid, Basheer (Said 46), Al Hosni (Al Mashari 68), Al Ajmi (Hadid 68).
Belarus: Veremko (Amelichenko 46) - Yurevich (Kislyak 61), Tigorev, Shitov (Polyakov 75), Omelyanchuk (Sosnovsky 46), Martynovich (Verkhovtsov 80), Kulchy, Krivets, Kalachev (Bordachev 46), Rodionov, V Hleb.

Nov 17 - Panama City
Panama 2 (Tejada 25, Haywood 52)
Honduras 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cruz (CR)
Panama: Penedo - R Torres, Rivera, Machado (Dasent 71), Davies (Herrera 70), Cummings, Buitrago, J Perez, Haywood, Brown (Bonaga 77), Tejada (Rentería 77).
Honduras: N Valladares - Arzu, Crisanto, Johnny Palacios, Garcia, Claros, Mena (E Martinez 58), M Martinez, Espinoza, Bengtson (Rojas 71), Flores (Welcome 66).

Nov 17 - Poznan
Poland 3 (R Lewandowski 19, 80, Obraniak 65)
Ivory Coast 1 (Gervinho 45+1)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Toma (Jap)
Poland: Fabianski - Wojtkowiak, Sadlok, Piszczek, Obraniak (Smolarek 89), Murawski, Matuszczyk (Wolakiewicz 90), Blaszczykowski, Jodlowiec, A Mierzejewski (Pawel Brozek 72), R Lewandowski (Borysiuk 84).
Ivory Coast: Yeboah - Bamba, Eboue (Romaric 54), Boka (Tiene 84), Zokora, Y Toure (Fae 88), Tiote (Angoua 90), Demel, Bony, Keita (Doumbia 71), Gervinho.

Nov 17 - Lisbon
Portugal 4 (Carlos Martins 45, Helder Postiga 49, 69, Hugo Almeida 90+3)
Spain 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,000. **Ref:** Gautier (Fra)
Portugal: Eduardo (Rui Patricio 46) - Joao Pereira, Ricardo Carvalho (Pepe 46), Bruno Alves, Bosingwa, Raul Meireles, Joao Moutinho, Carlos Martins (Manuel Fernandes 63), Nani (Paulo Machado 88), Helder Postiga (Hugo Almeida 76), Cristiano Ronaldo (Danny 46).
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Pique (Marchena 46), Puyol (Arbeloa 74), Capdevila, Busquets, Xabi Alonso (Cazorla 58), Xavi (Fabregas 46), Iniesta (Llorente 58), Silva, Villa (Fernando Torres 46).

Nov 17 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 1 (Long pen 5)
Norway 2 (Gamst Pedersen 34, Huseklepp 86)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Jakobsson (Ice)
Rep Ireland: Given - O'Shea, O'Dea (Foley 67), Kelly, Cunningham, Whelan, Lawrence (McGeady 46), Fahey, Duff (S Hunt 74), Long, Doyle (Walters 46).
Norway: Knudsen (Pettersen 46) - Waehler, J A Riise, Hogli, Hangeland, Vaagan Moen (Haestad 78), Gamst Pedersen, Huseklepp (Moldskred 90), Hauger, Grindheim (Jenssen 55), Helstad (B H Riise 46).

Nov 17 - Voronezh
Russia 0
Belgium 2 (Lukaku 2, 74)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 31,743. **Ref:** Kaasik (Est)
Russia: Akinfeev - Shishkin, Ignashevich (Mamaev 64), V Berezutsky (Vasin 46), Zyryanov (Semshov 65), Zhirkov, Shirokov, Dzagoev, Bilyaletdinov (Bukharov 74), Arshavin, Pogrebnyak.
Belgium: J-F Gillet - Van Buyten, Kompany, Ciman, Vertonghen, Simons, Hazard (Pocognoli 88), Fellaini, Defour, Lukaku (Vossen 75), Dembele (Odjidja-Ofoe 85).

to equal the record of Noud Van Melis, who made eight successive goalscoring appearances for the Dutch between 1950 and 1952.

ISRAEL

Damari's dream debut

Debutant striker Omer Damari of Maccabi Petah Tikva scored twice in the first 15 minutes to put Israel on the road to a 3-2 win over Iceland.

Double...Damari (left)

ITALY

Experimental team

Azzurri coach Cesare Prandelli handed debuts to Palermo left-back Federico Balzaretti, Genoa centre-half Andrea Ranocchia, Brescia attacker Alessandro Diamanti and Argentina-born midfielder Christian Ledesma of Lazio in the friendly against Romania.

Ciprian Marica scored for both sides in a 1-1 draw.

JAPAN

Saneto seals gold

A goal from defender Yuki Saneto of Kawasaki Frontale gave Japan victory over the United Arab Emirates and a first Asian Games football gold in the tournament for under-23 teams.

South Korea stunned Iran with three goals in the last 12 minutes to win the bronze-medal match 4-3.

Golden boys...Japan

Nov 17 - Dubai, UAE
Saudi Arabia 0
Ghana 0
Ghana: Kingson - Paintsil, D Addy, L Addy, J Mensah, Annan, Owusu-Abeyie (Agyemang-Badu), Boateng (Inkoom), Gyan, Asamoah (Clottey), A Ayew.

Nov 17 - Saint-Gratien, France
Senegal 2 (P D Cisse 43, Dia 57)
Gabon 1 (P-E Aubameyang 29)
HT: 1-1
Senegal: Coundoul - Diawara (Sall 46), Sane (Faty 62), Kamara (Ndoye 46), P D Cisse (M B Diouf 46), Tavarez (P K Diop 46), Drame (Thioune 65), Ndaw, Diakhate, Dia (N Ndiaye 73), Niang.

Nov 17 - Bratislava
Slovakia 2 (Sebo 3, Grajciar 63)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 3 (Medunjanin 28, Pjanic 50, Dzeko 60)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 7,822. **Ref:** Mikulski (Pol)
Slovakia: Mucha (Pernis 83) - Salata, Pekarik (Kopunek 79), Durica, Sapara (Hamsik 46), Karhan, Weiss (Holosko 61), Sestak (Grajciar 46), Sebo, Jendrisek, Stoch (Zabavnik 61).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sehic - Vranjes (Mravac 79), Spahic, Pandza, Salihovic (Subasic 62), Rahimic, Pjanic (Ibricic 85), Misimovic (Muslimovic 75), Medunjanin, Lulic, Dzeko (Ibisevic 83).

Nov 17 - Koper
Slovenia 1 (Cesar 51)
Georgia 2 (Guruli 67, Ananidze 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Whitby (Wal)
Slovenia: S Handanovic (J Handanovic 53) - Suler, Cesar, Brecko, Bacinovic, Koren (Radosavljevic 46), Jokic (Ilic 71), Kirm (Ljubijankic 81), Novakovic, Dedic (Matavz 46), Birsa (Ilicic 46).
Georgia: Loria - Kashia, Kvirkvelia, Khizanishvili, Khubutia, Kaladze, Khodzhava (Guruli 46), Ananidze (Koshkadze 89), Kankava (Kakubava 73), Modebadze (Vatsadze 46), Gelashvili (Okriashvili 62).

Nov 17 - Cape Town
South Africa 0
United States 1 (Agudelo 84)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 52,000. **Ref:** Kirwa (Ken)
South Africa: Khune - Sangweni, Ngcongca (Gaxa 79), Masilela, Gould, Tshabalala, Pienaar (Claasen 79), Khuboni (Pattison 88), Dikgacoi (Jali 59), Somma (Ngcobo 60), Parker (Erasmus 88).
United States: Guzan - Ream (Borchers 67), Lichaj, Goodson (Agbossoumonde 87), Bornstein (Spector 46), Rogers (Agudelo 60), Pause, Carroll, Bedoya (Diskerud 78), Gaven, Findley (Bunbury 46).

Nov 17 - Gothenburg
Sweden 0
Germany 0
Att: 21,959. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Sweden: Isaksson - Majstorovic, Lustig (Safari 69), Granqvist, Wendt, A Svensson, S Larsson, Kallstrom (Gerndt 88), Wilhelmsson, Wernbloom (R Elm 76), Toivonen (Berg 69).
Germany: Adler - Hummels, Boateng (Beck 46), Westermann, Schmelzer, Khedira (Trasch 59), Holtby (Schurrle 78), Grosskreutz (Gotze 78), Schweinsteiger (Kroos 59), Marin (Cacau 59), Gomez.

Nov 17 - Geneva
Switzerland 2 (Frei 40, 62)
Ukraine 2 (Aliev 47, Konoplyanka 75)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 11,100. **Ref:** Gumienny (Blg)
Switzerland: Wolfli - Lichtsteiner (Von Bergen 72), Djourou, Affolter, Ziegler, Stocker (D Degen 85), Schwegler (Costanzo 66), Inler (Fernandes 46), Barnetta (Shaqiri 46), Yakin, Frei (Ben Khalifa 76).
Ukraine: Pyatov - Rakitskyi, Mykhalyk (Stepanenko 65), Mandzyuk, Fedetskyi, Chygrynskyi, Tymoshchuk, Devic (Milevskyi 46), Aliev, Yarmolenko (Oliynik 74), Konoplyanka (Morozyuk 87).

Nov 17 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 1 (Choriev 33)
Afghanistan 0
HT: 1-0

Thursday, November 18

Nov 18 - Doha
Qatar 0
Haiti 1 (Constant 52)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Al Awaji (Sau)
Qatar: Burhan - Kassola, Al Sulaiti, Kwasi, Yasser, Hamad, Soria, Afif, Mohammed, Rizk, Quaye.
Haiti: Jean-Zephirin - Alcenat, Bertin, Constant, K Pierre-Louis, Joseph, W Guerrier, Lafrance, Rubin, Fucien, Charles.

Nov 18 - Dubai
United Arab Emirates 5 (Al Kas 15, Mubarak 35, Al Wehaibi 62, 73, Jumaa 72)
India 0
HT: 2-0

Sunday, November 21

Nov 21 - Palembang
Indonesia 6 (Muhammad 12, Oktavianus 26, Gonzalez 37, 46, Bambang 70, Yongki 83)
East Timor 0
HT: 3-0

Tuesday, November 23

Nov 23 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 1 (Mwaikimba 1)
Kenya 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, November 24

Nov 24 - Palembang
Indonesia 2 (Gonzalez 7, Firman pen 18)
Taiwan 0
HT: 2-0

Friday, November 26

Nov 26 - Singapore
Singapore 4 (Noh Alam Shah 45, Casmir 56, pen 85, Nawaz 81)
Laos 0
HT: 1-0
Singapore: Sunny (Mahbud 71) - R Sulaiman (Rahman 46), Khaizan (Baharudin 46), Bennett (Yunos 78), Jantan (Emuejeraye 46), Ridhuan (Masturi 9), S Sulaiman (Nawaz 46), Fahrudin (Mushadad 71), Ishak (Halim 70), Noh Alam Shah (Amri 62), Duric (Casmir 46).

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Group A

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	4	4	0	0	13	1	12
Austria	3	2	1	0	9	4	7
Turkey	4	2	0	2	6	6	6
Belgium	4	1	1	2	8	8	4
Azerbaijan	3	1	0	2	2	9	3
Kazakhstan	4	0	0	4	0	10	0

03.09.10 Belgium v Germany 0-1
03.09.10 Kazakhstan v Turkey 0-3
07.09.10 Austria v Kazakhstan 2-0
07.09.10 Germany v Azerbaijan 6-1
07.09.10 Turkey v Belgium 3-2
08.10.10 Austria v Azerbaijan 3-0
08.10.10 Germany v Turkey 3-0
08.10.10 Kazakhstan v Belgium 0-2
12.10.10 Azerbaijan v Turkey 1-0
12.10.10 Belgium v Austria 4-4
12.10.10 Kazakhstan v Germany 0-3
25.03.11 Austria v Belgium
25.03.11 Germany v Kazakhstan
29.03.11 Belgium v Azerbaijan
29.03.11 Turkey v Austria
03.06.11 Austria v Germany
03.06.11 Belgium v Turkey
03.06.11 Kazakhstan v Azerbaijan
07.06.11 Azerbaijan v Germany
02.09.11 Azerbaijan v Belgium
02.09.11 Germany v Austria
02.09.11 Turkey v Kazakhstan
06.09.11 Austria v Turkey
06.09.11 Azerbaijan v Kazakhstan
07.10.11 Azerbaijan v Austria
07.10.11 Belgium v Kazakhstan
07.10.11 Turkey v Germany
11.10.11 Germany v Belgium
11.10.11 Kazakhstan v Austria
11.10.11 Turkey v Azerbaijan

Group B

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Russia	4	3	0	1	6	3	9
Rep Ireland	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Armenia	4	2	1	1	9	4	7
Slovakia	4	2	1	1	4	4	7
Macedonia	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Andorra	4	0	0	4	1	11	0

03.09.10 Andorra v Russia 0-2
03.09.10 Armenia v Rep of Ireland 0-1
03.09.10 Slovakia v Macedonia 1-0
07.09.10 Macedonia v Armenia 2-2
07.09.10 Rep of Ireland v Andorra 3-1
07.09.10 Russia v Slovakia 0-1
08.10.10 Andorra v Macedonia 0-2
08.10.10 Armenia v Slovakia 3-1
08.10.10 Rep of Ireland v Russia 2-3
12.10.10 Armenia v Andorra 4-0
12.10.10 Macedonia v Russia 0-1
12.10.10 Slovakia v Rep of Ireland 1-1
26.03.11 Andorra v Slovakia
26.03.11 Armenia v Russia
26.03.11 Rep of Ireland v Macedonia
04.06.11 Macedonia v Rep of Ireland
04.06.11 Russia v Armenia
04.06.11 Slovakia v Andorra
02.09.11 Andorra v Armenia
02.09.11 Rep of Ireland v Slovakia
02.09.11 Russia v Macedonia
06.09.11 Macedonia v Andorra
06.09.11 Russia v Rep of Ireland
06.09.11 Slovakia v Armenia
07.10.11 Andorra v Rep of Ireland
07.10.11 Armenia v Macedonia
07.10.11 Slovakia v Russia
11.10.11 Macedonia v Slovakia
11.10.11 Rep of Ireland v Armenia
11.10.11 Russia v Andorra

Group C

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	4	3	1	0	10	1	10
Slovenia	4	2	1	1	7	3	7
Estonia	4	2	0	2	6	5	6
N Ireland	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Serbia	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
Faroe Islands	5	0	1	4	3	16	1

11.08.10 Estonia v Faroe Islands 2-1
03.09.10 Estonia v Italy 1-2
03.09.10 Faroe Islands v Serbia 0-3
03.09.10 Slovenia v N Ireland 0-1
07.09.10 Italy v Faroe Islands 5-0
07.09.10 Serbia v Slovenia 1-1
08.10.10 N Ireland v Italy 0-0
08.10.10 Serbia v Estonia 1-3
08.10.10 Slovenia v Faroe Islands 5-1
12.10.10 Estonia v Slovenia 0-1
12.10.10 Faroe Islands v N Ireland 1-1
12.10.10 Italy v Serbia ..... (awarded) 3-0
25.03.11 Serbia v N Ireland
25.03.11 Slovenia v Italy
29.03.11 Estonia v Serbia
29.03.11 N Ireland v Slovenia
03.06.11 Faroe Islands v Slovenia
03.06.11 Italy v Estonia
07.06.11 Faroe Islands v Estonia
10.08.11 N Ireland v Faroe Islands
02.09.11 Faroe Islands v Italy
02.09.11 N Ireland v Serbia
02.09.11 Slovenia v Estonia
06.09.11 Estonia v N Ireland
06.09.11 Italy v Slovenia
06.09.11 Serbia v Faroe Islands
07.10.11 N Ireland v Estonia
07.10.11 Serbia v Italy
11.10.11 Italy v N Ireland
11.10.11 Slovenia v Serbia

Group D

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	4	3	0	1	6	1	9
Belarus	4	2	2	0	3	0	8
Albania	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
Bosnia-Herz	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Romania	3	0	2	1	1	3	2
Luxembourg	4	0	1	3	0	6	1

03.09.10 France v Belarus 0-1
03.09.10 Luxembourg v Bosnia-Herz 0-3
03.09.10 Romania v Albania 1-1
07.09.10 Albania v Luxembourg 1-0
07.09.10 Belarus v Romania 0-0
07.09.10 Bosnia-Herz v France 0-2
08.10.10 Albania v Bosnia-Herz 1-1
08.10.10 Luxembourg v Belarus 0-0
09.10.10 France v Romania 2-0
12.10.10 Belarus v Albania 2-0
12.10.10 France v Luxembourg 2-0
25.03.11 Luxembourg v France
26.03.11 Albania v Belarus
26.03.11 Bosnia-Herz v Romania
29.03.11 Romania v Luxembourg

Rivals...North Korea (in red) and South Korea Under-23s

NIGER
First-ever success
A goal by Issoufou Hinsa against Benin in the Final of the UEMOA Cup gave Niger their first-ever trophy. The competition is for local-based players in French-speaking countries in west Africa.

NORTH KOREA
Victory in Vietnam
Goals from Myong Cha-hyon and Ri Jin-hyok secured victory over Vietnam to win the VFF Cup. North Korea also beat Singapore and drew with South Korea Under-23s in the competition.

PARAGUAY
Seven for long server
Gerardo Martino celebrated setting a new national record for games as coach of the national side with a 7-0 thrashing of Hong Kong. Roque Santa Cruz (two), Edgar Barreto, Jose Ortigoza

58 games in which Gerardo Martino has taken charge of Paraguay's national side

Revenge...Portugal Carlos Martins (left)

03.06.11 Belarus v France
03.06.11 Romania v Bosnia-Herz
07.06.11 Belarus v Luxembourg
07.06.11 Bosnia-Herz v Albania
02.09.11 Albania v France
02.09.11 Belarus v Bosnia-Herz
02.09.11 Luxembourg v Romania
06.09.11 Bosnia-Herz v Belarus
06.09.11 Luxembourg v Albania
06.09.11 Romania v France
07.10.11 Bosnia-Herz v Luxembourg
07.10.11 France v Albania
07.10.11 Romania v Belarus
11.10.11 Albania v Romania
11.10.11 France v Bosnia-Herz

Group E

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	4	4	0	0	12	2	12
Hungary	4	3	0	1	12	4	9
Sweden	3	2	0	1	9	4	6
Moldova	4	2	0	2	5	3	6
Finland	4	1	0	3	10	6	3
San Marino	5	0	0	5	0	29	0

03.09.10 Moldova v Finland 2-0
03.09.10 San Marino v Holland 0-5
03.09.10 Sweden v Hungary 2-0
07.09.10 Holland v Finland 2-1
07.09.10 Hungary v Moldova 2-1
07.09.10 Sweden v San Marino 6-0
08.10.10 Hungary v San Marino 8-0
08.10.10 Moldova v Holland 0-1
12.10.10 Finland v Hungary 1-2
12.10.10 Holland v Sweden 4-1
12.10.10 San Marino v Moldova 0-2
17.11.10 Finland v San Marino 8-0
25.03.11 Hungary v Holland
29.03.11 Holland v Hungary
29.03.11 Sweden v Moldova
03.06.11 Moldova v Sweden
03.06.11 San Marino v Finland
07.06.11 San Marino v Hungary
07.06.11 Sweden v Finland
02.09.11 Finland v Moldova
02.09.11 Holland v San Marino
02.09.11 Hungary v Sweden
06.09.11 Finland v Holland
06.09.11 Moldova v Hungary
06.09.11 San Marino v Sweden
07.10.11 Finland v Sweden
07.10.11 Holland v Moldova
11.10.11 Hungary v Finland
11.10.11 Moldova v San Marino
11.10.11 Sweden v Holland

Group F

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	4	3	1	0	8	1	10
Greece	4	2	2	0	4	2	8
Georgia	4	1	3	0	3	2	6
Israel	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
Latvia	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Malta	4	0	0	4	1	9	0

02.09.10 Israel v Malta 3-1
03.09.10 Greece v Georgia 1-1
03.09.10 Latvia v Croatia 0-3
07.09.10 Croatia v Greece 0-0
07.09.10 Georgia v Israel 0-0
07.09.10 Malta v Latvia 0-2
08.10.10 Georgia v Malta 1-0
08.10.10 Greece v Latvia 1-0
09.10.10 Israel v Croatia 1-2
12.10.10 Greece v Israel 2-1
12.10.10 Latvia v Georgia 1-1
17.11.10 Croatia v Malta 3-0
26.03.11 Georgia v Croatia
26.03.11 Israel v Latvia
26.03.11 Malta v Greece
29.03.11 Israel v Georgia
04.06.11 Croatia v Georgia
04.06.11 Greece v Malta
04.06.11 Latvia v Israel
02.09.11 Georgia v Latvia
02.09.11 Israel v Greece
02.09.11 Malta v Croatia
06.09.11 Croatia v Israel
06.09.11 Latvia v Greece
06.09.11 Malta v Georgia
07.10.11 Greece v Croatia
07.10.11 Latvia v Malta
11.10.11 Croatia v Latvia
11.10.11 Georgia v Greece
11.10.11 Malta v Israel

Group G

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Montenegro	4	3	1	0	3	0	10
England	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Switzerland	3	1	0	2	5	5	3
Bulgaria	3	1	0	2	1	5	3
Wales	3	0	0	3	1	6	0

03.09.10 England v Bulgaria 4-0
03.09.10 Montenegro v Wales 1-0
07.09.10 Bulgaria v Montenegro 0-1
07.09.10 Switzerland v England 1-3
08.10.10 Montenegro v Switzerland 1-0
08.10.10 Wales v Bulgaria 0-1
12.10.10 England v Montenegro 0-0
12.10.10 Switzerland v Wales 4-1
26.03.11 Bulgaria v Switzerland
26.03.11 Wales v England
04.06.11 England v Switzerland
04.06.11 Montenegro v Bulgaria
02.09.11 Bulgaria v England
02.09.11 Wales v Montenegro
06.09.11 England v Wales
06.09.11 Switzerland v Bulgaria
07.10.11 Montenegro v England
07.10.11 Wales v Switzerland
11.10.11 Bulgaria v Wales
11.10.11 Switzerland v Montenegro

Group H

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norway	3	3	0	0	5	2	9
Portugal	4	2	1	1	10	7	7
Denmark	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Cyprus	3	0	1	2	5	8	1
Iceland	3	0	0	3	2	6	0

03.09.10 Iceland v Norway 1-2
03.09.10 Portugal v Cyprus 4-4
07.09.10 Denmark v Iceland 1-0
07.09.10 Norway v Portugal 1-0
08.10.10 Cyprus v Norway 1-2
08.10.10 Portugal v Denmark 3-1
12.10.10 Denmark v Cyprus 2-0
12.10.10 Iceland v Portugal 1-3
26.03.11 Cyprus v Iceland
26.03.11 Norway v Denmark
04.06.11 Iceland v Denmark
04.06.11 Portugal v Norway
02.09.11 Cyprus v Portugal
02.09.11 Norway v Iceland
06.09.11 Denmark v Norway
06.09.11 Iceland v Cyprus
07.10.11 Cyprus v Denmark
07.10.11 Portugal v Iceland
11.10.11 Denmark v Portugal
11.10.11 Norway v Cyprus

Group I

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	3	3	0	0	10	3	9
Czech Rep	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
Scotland	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Lithuania	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Liechtenstein	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

03.09.10 Liechtenstein v Spain 0-4
03.09.10 Lithuania v Scotland 0-0
07.09.10 Czech Republic v Lithuania 0-1
07.09.10 Scotland v Liechtenstein 2-1
08.10.10 Czech Republic v Scotland 1-0
08.10.10 Spain v Lithuania 3-1
12.10.10 Liechtenstein v Czech Rep 0-2
12.10.10 Scotland v Spain 2-3
25.03.11 Spain v Czech Republic
29.03.11 Czech Rep v Liechtenstein
29.03.11 Lithuania v Spain
03.06.11 Liechtenstein v Lithuania
02.09.11 Lithuania v Liechtenstein
03.09.11 Scotland v Czech Republic
06.09.11 Scotland v Lithuania
06.09.11 Spain v Liechtenstein
07.10.11 Czech Republic v Spain
08.10.11 Liechtenstein v Scotland
11.10.11 Lithuania v Czech Republic
11.10.11 Spain v Scotland

The nine group winners and the runner-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups) qualify automatically for the finals. The eight remaining runners-up will be drawn in four head-to-head, two-leg play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Poland and Ukraine qualify automatically

Play-off dates:
1st legs - November 11/12, 2011;
2nd legs - November 15, 2011

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Group A

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cape Verde	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Mali	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Zimbabwe	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Liberia	2	0	1	1	2	3	1

04.09.10 Cape Verde v Mali 1-0
05.09.10 Liberia v Zimbabwe 1-1
09.10.10 Mali v Liberia 2-1
10.10.10 Zimbabwe v Cape Verde 0-0
26.03.11 Cape Verde v Liberia
26.03.11 Mali v Zimbabwe
04.06.11 Liberia v Cape Verde
04.06.11 Zimbabwe v Mali
03.09.11 Mali v Cape Verde
03.09.11 Zimbabwe v Liberia
08.10.11 Cape Verde v Zimbabwe
08.10.11 Liberia v Mali

Group B

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Nigeria	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Ethiopia	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Madagascar	2	0	0	2	0	3	0

05.09.10 Ethiopia v Guinea 1-4
05.09.10 Nigeria v Madagascar 2-0
10.10.10 Guinea v Nigeria 1-0
10.10.10 Madagascar v Ethiopia 0-1
26.03.11 Madagascar v Guinea
26.03.11 Nigeria v Ethiopia
04.06.11 Ethiopia v Nigeria
04.06.11 Guinea v Madagascar
03.09.11 Guinea v Ethiopia
03.09.11 Madagascar v Nigeria
08.10.11 Ethiopia v Madagascar
08.10.11 Nigeria v Guinea

Group C

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mozambique	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Libya	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Zambia	2	1	0	1	4	1	3
Comoros	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

05.09.10 Mozambique v Libya 0-0
05.09.10 Zambia v Comoros 4-0
09.10.10 Comoros v Mozambique 0-1
10.10.10 Libya v Zambia 1-0
26.03.11 Libya v Comoros
26.03.11 Mozambique v Zambia
04.06.11 Comoros v Libya
04.06.11 Zambia v Mozambique
03.09.11 Comoros v Zambia
03.09.11 Libya v Mozambique
08.10.11 Mozambique v Comoros
08.10.11 Zambia v Libya

(two), Cristian Riveros and Marcos Riveros were all on target for Martino, who took charge of the *Albirroja* in February 2007 and led them to a historic first World Cup quarter-final this summer.

PORTUGAL

Spain made to suffer

Paulo Bento made it three wins out of three since replacing Carlos Queiroz in September as Portugal beat Spain 4-0.

Spain, who started with 10 of the side that began the World Cup Final in the summer, suffered their heaviest defeat since 1963.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

109 for Given

Norway ruined Shay Given's big night when goals from Morten Gamst Pedersen and Erik Huseklepp cancelled out a fifth-minute penalty from Reading's Shane Long at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin as the 34-year-old Manchester City stopper made a record 109th appearance for his country.

At the other end of the spectrum, starting out on his international career was Stoke City striker Jon Walters, who was handed a first cap as a half-time substitute.

USA

New boys combine

Bob Bradley's side beat South Africa 1-0 in Cape Town with a goal from debutant Juan Agudelo of New York, who turned 18 a week after the game.

The Colombia-born striker was set up by another newcomer, Norway-born Mikkel Diskerud, who plays for Stabaek.

Teen star...Agudelo

Group D

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cent Af Rep	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Morocco	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Tanzania	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Algeria	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

03.09.10 Algeria v Tanzania 1-1
04.09.10 Morocco v Cent Af Rep 0-0
09.10.10 Tanzania v Morocco 0-1
10.10.10 Cent Af Rep v Algeria 2-0
26.03.11 Algeria v Morocco
26.03.11 Tanzania v Cent Af Rep
04.06.11 Cent Af Rep v Tanzania
04.06.11 Morocco v Algeria
03.09.11 Cent Af Rep v Morocco
03.09.11 Tanzania v Algeria
08.10.11 Algeria v Cent Af Rep
08.10.11 Morocco v Tanzania

Group E

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	2	2	0	0	11	2	6
Cameroon	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
DR Congo	2	0	1	1	3	5	1
Mauritius	2	0	0	2	1	10	0

04.09.10 Mauritius v Cameroon 1-3
05.09.10 DR Congo v Senegal 2-4
09.10.10 Cameroon v DR Congo 1-1
09.10.10 Senegal v Mauritius 7-0
26.03.11 DR Congo v Mauritius
26.03.11 Senegal v Cameroon
04.06.11 Cameroon v Senegal
04.06.11 Mauritius v DR Congo
03.09.11 Cameroon v Mauritius
03.09.11 Senegal v DR Congo
08.10.11 DR Congo v Cameroon
08.10.11 Mauritius v Senegal

Group F

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Gambia	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Namibia	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

Mauritania withdrew before 1st round of games

04.09.10 Gambia v Namibia 3-1
09.10.10 Burkina Faso v Gambia 3-1
26.03.11 Burkina Faso v Namibia
04.06.11 Namibia v Burkina Faso
03.09.11 Namibia v Gambia
08.10.11 Gambia v Burkina Faso

Group G

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Niger	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Sierra Leone	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Egypt	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

04.09.10 South Africa v Niger 2-0
05.09.10 Egypt v Sierra Leone 1-1
10.10.10 Niger v Egypt 1-0
10.10.10 Sierra Leone v South Africa 0-0
26.03.11 Niger v Sierra Leone
26.03.11 South Africa v Egypt
04.06.11 Egypt v South Africa
04.06.11 Sierra Leone v Niger
03.09.11 Niger v South Africa
03.09.11 Sierra Leone v Egypt
08.10.11 Egypt v Niger
08.10.11 South Africa v Sierra Leone

Group H

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Benin	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Burundi	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Rwanda	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

04.09.10 Ivory Coast v Rwanda 3-0
05.09.10 Benin v Burundi 1-1
09.10.10 Burundi v Ivory Coast 0-1
09.10.10 Rwanda v Benin 0-3
26.03.11 Ivory Coast v Benin
26.03.11 Rwanda v Burundi
04.06.11 Benin v Ivory Coast
04.06.11 Burundi v Rwanda
03.09.11 Burundi v Benin
03.09.11 Rwanda v Ivory Coast
08.10.11 Benin v Rwanda
08.10.11 Ivory Coast v Burundi

Group I

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Sudan	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Congo	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Swaziland	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

04.09.10 Sudan v Congo 2-0
05.09.10 Swaziland v Ghana 0-3
10.10.10 Congo v Swaziland 3-1
10.10.10 Ghana v Sudan 0-0
26.03.11 Congo v Ghana
26.03.11 Sudan v Swaziland
04.06.11 Ghana v Congo
04.06.11 Swaziland v Sudan
03.09.11 Congo v Sudan
03.09.11 Ghana v Swaziland
08.10.11 Sudan v Ghana
08.10.11 Swaziland v Congo

Group J

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Guinea-Bissau	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Angola	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Kenya	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

04.09.10 Guinea-Bissau v Kenya 1-0
04.09.10 Uganda v Angola 3-0
09.10.10 Angola v Guinea-Bissau 1-0
09.10.10 Kenya v Uganda 0-0
26.03.11 Guinea-Bissau v Uganda
26.03.11 Kenya v Angola
04.06.11 Angola v Kenya
04.06.11 Uganda v Guinea-Bissau
03.09.11 Angola v Uganda
03.09.11 Kenya v Guinea-Bissau
08.10.11 Guinea-Bissau v Angola
08.10.11 Uganda v Kenya

Group K

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botswana	5	4	1	0	6	2	13
Tunisia	5	2	1	2	7	6	7
Malawi	4	1	3	0	10	6	6
Togo	5	0	3	2	5	7	3
Chad	5	0	2	3	5	12	2

01.07.10 Chad v Togo 2-2
01.07.10 Tunisia v Botswana 0-1
09.07.10 Botswana v Chad 1-0
09.07.10 Togo v Malawi 1-1
11.08.10 Chad v Tunisia 1-3
11.08.10 Malawi v Botswana 1-1
04.09.10 Botswana v Togo 2-1
04.09.10 Tunisia v Malawi 2-2
09.10.10 Malawi v Chad 6-2
10.10.10 Togo v Tunisia 1-2
17.11.10 Botswana v Tunisia 1-0
17.11.10 Togo v Chad 0-0
26.03.11 Chad v Botswana
26.03.11 Malawi v Togo
04.06.11 Botswana v Malawi
04.06.11 Tunisia v Chad
03.09.11 Malawi v Tunisia
03.09.11 Togo v Botswana
08.10.11 Chad v Malawi
08.10.11 Tunisia v Togo

The 11 group winners, the runners-up in Group K (the only five-team group) and the two other runners-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st and 3rd in the respective groups) qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Equatorial Guinea and Gabon qualify automatically

2011 COPA AMERICA

To be staged in Argentina

Draw & match schedule

Group A

Argentina
Bolivia
Colombia
Japan

01.07.11 Argentina v Bolivia (La Plata)
02.07.11 Colombia v Japan (Jujuy)
06.07.11 Argentina v Colombia (Santa Fe)
07.07.11 Bolivia v Japan (Jujuy)
10.07.11 Colombia v Bolivia (Santa Fe)
11.07.11 Argentina v Japan (Cordoba)

Group B

Brazil
Ecuador
Paraguay
Venezuela

03.07.11 Brazil v Venezuela (La Plata)
03.07.11 Paraguay v Ecuador (Santa Fe)
09.07.11 Brazil v Paraguay (Cordoba)
09.07.11 Venezuela v Ecuador (Salta)
13.07.11 Paraguay v Venezuela (Salta)
13.07.11 Brazil v Ecuador (Cordoba)

Group C

Chile
Mexico
Peru
Uruguay

04.07.11 Uruguay v Peru (San Juan)
04.07.11 Chile v Mexico (San Juan)
08.07.11 Peru v Mexico (Mendoza)
08.07.11 Uruguay v Chile (Mendoza)
12.07.11 Chile v Peru (Mendoza)
12.07.11 Uruguay v Mexico (La Plata)

The top two in each group and the two third-placed teams with the best record qualify for the quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

16.07.11 Gp A 1st v 1st 3rd-place (Cordoba) (QF1)
16.07.11 Gp A 2nd v Gp C 2nd (Santa Fe) (QF2)
17.07.11 Gp B 1st v 2nd 3rd-place (La Plata) (QF3)
17.07.11 Gp C 1st v Gp B 2nd (San Juan) (QF4)

Semi-finals

19.07.11 QF1 winners v QF2 winners (La Plata)
20.07.11 QF3 winners v QF4 winners (Mendoza)

Third-place play-off

23.07.11 (La Plata)

Final

24.07.11 (Buenos Aires)

ASIAN CUP GROUP A

Previews by Michael Church

QATAR

Physical...Soria

THE hosts have not enjoyed much in the way of success at the Asian Cup, having only progressed beyond the group stages of the competition once in their last seven appearances.

That kind of performance will not be accepted as the nation stages the tournament for the second time – Qatar was the venue for the 1988 Asian Cup – and the pressure is on coach Bruno Metsu to take his team to at least the semi-finals. But his side have been struggling and they failed to make it out of the group stages of the Gulf Cup in November.

With the added pressure on Qatar – as a future host of the World Cup who have never played in the finals of the game's leading competition – all eyes will be on the team for signs of improvement as the long road towards 2022 begins.

Metsu's squad is a mix of naturalised players – such as Brazil-born midfielder Fabio Cesar and Uruguayan striker Sebastian Soria – and those brought through the Qatar youth system. Local interests are served by former Asian player of the year Khalfan Ibrahim, who is gradually returning to the kind of form he showed in his teenage years after overcoming a series of knee injuries.

COACH: BRUNO METSU
Much-travelled Frenchman who has a successful track record in the Middle East.

KEY PLAYER: SEBASTIAN SORIA
The striker has added quality and a physical presence to the attack.

KUWAIT

Victors...Gulf Cup 2010

KUWAIT'S status within the region is on the rise again after they won both the West Asian Championship and the Gulf Cup in 2010.

The nation's record at regional and continental level is among the best in Asia, having won the Gulf Cup a record 10 times, claimed the Asian Cup in 1980 and qualified for the 1982 World Cup finals in Spain.

That the country's fortunes are on the way back up is down to the work being done by Goran Tufegdzic. The Serbian replaced local coach Mohammed Ibrahim in February 2009, signalling the country's return to working with coaches from eastern Europe after a disappointing dalliance with those from Brazil, and he has made steady improvements to the team.

The culmination of those developments saw a young side win the West Asian Championship in October before they beat Saudi Arabia in the Final of the Gulf Cup in early December.

The test for Tufegdzic will be to lift his players once again in Qatar in a group that will be among the toughest in the competition. His task will be aided and abetted by the stellar form of Bader Al Mutwa.

COACH: GORAN TUFEGDZIC
One of the youngest coaches at the finals, he was previously the assistant to Mohammed Ibrahim.

KEY PLAYER: BADER AL MUTWA
Striker or an attacking midfielder who has twice been nominated for the Asian player of the year award.

UZBEKISTAN

Prolific...Shatskikh

SINCE their arrival on the Asian football scene in 1994 following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan have long been seen as the next big thing in the continental game, only for those expectations to prove too great.

With a heritage of supplying numerous players for the leading teams in the Soviet-era league, and with many Uzbeks having played for clubs in the Russian and Ukrainian leagues in the intervening years, the country does not lack for talent.

But despite that wealth of experience and ability, Uzbekistan are one of Asian football's biggest disappointments. They have yet to progress to the semi-finals of the Asian Cup or qualify for the finals of the World Cup.

Uzbekistan's best performances at the Asian Cup have come over the last two tournaments, where they reached the quarter-finals.

The current squad boasts the talents of veteran striker Maksim Shatskikh and former Asian player of the year Server Djeparov as well as a host of other more experienced players. However, a new batch of young players are breaking through. Many ply their trade with cash-rich Bunyodkor, who dominate locally.

COACH: VADIM ABRAMOV
Former Traktor coach who took over the national team in April 2010.

KEY PLAYER: MAKSIM SHATSKIKH
The country's all-time leading goalscorer is one of Asia's most feared forwards.

CHINA

Influential...Du Wei (right)

ASIA'S perennial underachievers, China have yet to make a significant impact on the Asian Cup, having twice reached the Final without lifting the trophy.

Their run to the Final on home soil in 2004 marked the last true high point of the world's most populous nation. They were then humiliated in 2007 when they failed to progress beyond the group stages and then failed to qualify for the final phase of Asia's 2010 World Cup qualifying tournament.

There was some hope, however, in early 2010 when they beat South Korea for the first time in over 30 years after drawing 0-0 against Japan at the East Asian Championships.

Those results were enough to ensure China won the regional title for the first time since 2005 and they also beat France in a friendly in the lead up to South Africa 2010.

COACH: GAO HONGBO
Led China to the East Asian Championship in February 2010.

KEY PLAYER: DU WEI
Despite his difficulties in a short stint at Celtic earlier in his career, he is now an influential leader.

GROUP A FIXTURES

JAN 7	QATAR v UZBEKISTAN
JAN 8	KUWAIT v CHINA
JAN 12	UZBEKISTAN v KUWAIT
JAN 12	CHINA v QATAR
JAN 16	QATAR v KUWAIT
JAN 16	CHINA v UZBEKISTAN

ASIAN CUP GROUP B

JAPAN

Exciting...Kagawa

THESE are changing times for the three-time Asian Cup winners with Alberto Zaccheroni replacing World Cup hero Takeshi Okada.

Zaccheroni's tenure had a barely believable beginning as his charges handed Argentina a 1-0 defeat, then drew 0-0 against South Korea in Seoul to carry on their form from their time in South Africa.

In his short time in charge, Zaccheroni has changed the philosophy of the team and has Japan playing more to their creative and attacking strengths.

Perhaps Japan's greatest concern is a lack of match practice under their new coach, but the Italian continues to stress that he has set his sights on winning the Asian Cup and he intends to select as strong a squad as possible, which will mean gaining the release of a number of Europe-based players.

One major change to the personnel will be the introduction of Shinji Kagawa, who has been in blistering form for Borussia Dortmund, but by and large the squad that travels to Qatar will bear a striking resemblance to Japan's World Cup team.

COACH: ALBERTO ZACCHERONI
The former Milan and Juventus leader was a surprise choice for the post but he has had an immediate positive impact.

KEY PLAYER: KEISUKE HONDA
The midfielder impressed in his first full season at CSKA Moscow and at the World Cup.

SAUDI ARABIA

Potent...Al Qahtani

SAUDI ARABIA'S reputation as one of the powers of Asian football suffered a jolt in late 2009 when – for the first time since 1990 – the country failed to qualify for the World Cup finals.

For a nation that prides itself on its position within the region's game, failure came as a significant blow, especially as it followed hot on the heels of yet another defeat in the Final of the Asian Cup in 2007.

Despite their recent slip, the Saudis remain one of the favourites to win the 2011 title. Only one Asian Cup Final since 1984 – when Japan beat China in 2004 – has not featured the Saudis, with the country claiming victory in 1984, 1988 and 1996.

The Saudis qualified for the Asian Cup finals by virtue of their runners-up finish in the 2007 finals. A side made up entirely of players from the domestic Saudi league and featuring a mix of youth and experience lies at coach Jose Peseiro's disposal. He will insist on playing attacking football and in Yasser Al Qahtani and Naif Hazazi, the Saudis have one of the most potent forward lines currently featuring in the Asian game.

COACH: JOSE PESEIRO
Portuguese coach who held on to his position despite failing to reach South Africa 2010.

KEY PLAYER: YASSER AL QAHTANI
The most expensive domestic player in the history of the Saudi league.

SYRIA

Promising...Al Khatib

SYRIA return to the Asian Cup finals for the first time since 1996, when they were eliminated at the group stages in the UAE.

Despite playing at the Asian Cup on four occasions, the Arab state has yet to progress beyond the first round but hopes will be high that they can pull off a surprise in Qatar in what is a difficult group.

The Syrians qualified for the finals after finishing top of a group that featured China, Lebanon and Vietnam, but their preparations have been hampered by a delay to filling the post of head coach following the removal of Fajr Ibrahim. Ayman Hakeem acted as caretaker during the participation in October's West Asian Championships before being replaced by Ratomir Dujkovic, who has signed a three-and-a-half month contract.

Several of the squad were members of the Al Karamah side that reached the Finals of the Asian Champions League in 2006 and the 2009 AFC Cup.

Al Ittihad won the latest edition of the AFC Cup, proving that Syrian football is now consistently producing players capable of performing at the very highest level in Asia.

COACH: RATOMIR DUJKOVIC
Serbian who was responsible for Myanmar's national team as well as China's Olympic team in 2008.

KEY PLAYER: FIRAS AL KHATIB
Leading striker who plays his club football in Kuwait with Al Qadsia.

JORDAN

Star performer...Al Safai (right)

JORDAN will be making their second appearance at the Asian Cup finals and they return after exiting the 2004 tournament in controversial circumstances.

The Arab side were eliminated in the quarter-finals in China on penalties by defending champions – and eventual winners – Japan, but only after the shoot-out was shifted from one goal to the other midway through in an unprecedented move. Jordan were leading in the shoot-out when Malaysian referee Subhkiddin Mohd decided to change ends due to the deterioration of the ground around the penalty spot. The move unsettled the Jordanians and, ultimately, the Japanese triumphed.

Iraqi coach Adnan Hamed replaced Nelo Vingada early in the campaign and his arrival galvanised the team, who booked their spot ahead of Singapore and Thailand.

COACH: ADNAN HAMED
Former Iraq coach who led his country to the semi-finals of the 2004 Olympics.

KEY PLAYER: ODAI AL SAFAI
Can play on the left side of midfield, as a second striker or up front.

GROUP B FIXTURES

JAN 9	JAPAN v JORDAN
JAN 9	SAUDI ARABIA v SYRIA
JAN13	JORDAN v SAUDI ARABIA
JAN13	SYRIA v JAPAN
JAN 17	SAUDI ARABIA v JAPAN
JAN 17	JORDAN v SYRIA

ASIAN CUP GROUP C

AUSTRALIA

Last chance...Kewell

AUSTRALIA'S Asian Cup debut in 2007 was characterised by an arrogance that saw them afforded little sympathy as they lost in the quarter-finals, on penalties to Japan.

That humbling experience – which also saw them beaten by Iraq and draw with Oman – chastened the Australians and they have now engaged with the Asian football community with more humility.

Holger Osieck has taken over from the controversial World Cup coach Pim Verbeek, who rarely won the affections of the Australian public with his pragmatic approach to the game. Osieck is seeking to bring a more attacking mindset and has set about rebuilding the bridges between the coach's position and the domestic league after Verbeek spent much of his time denigrating the standard of local football.

Osieck is expected to stick by many of those who featured at the World Cup, while also opening the door to several players overlooked by Verbeek. Among those is Asian player of the year Sasa Ognenovski, who won his first cap under Osieck against Egypt in November.

COACH: HOLGER OSIECK
German coach with a track record of success at national and club level, having led Canada to the Gold Cup and Urawa Reds to the Asian Champions League.

KEY PLAYER: HARRY KEWELL
Keen to make his mark at what is sure to be his last major tournament with the Socceroos.

BAHRAIN

Naturalised...John

OVER the last decade, Bahrain have been one of the most improved teams in Asia, hauling themselves into the upper tier of the continental game.

On two occasions the tiny Gulf state have gone agonisingly close to qualifying for their first World Cup finals, losing out in play-offs to Trinidad and Tobago (2006) and New Zealand (2010). But their performances at the Asian Cup have been less stellar, with their best showing coming in China in 2004 when they reached the semi-finals.

The failure to qualify for the World Cup saw Milan Macala lose his job, though he did steer the team to the Asian Cup finals through a group that featured Hong Kong, Yemen and Japan before making way.

Austrian coach Josef Hickersberger was supposed to be Macala's long-term replacement but he resigned after October's West Asian Championship, with local coach Salman Sharida taking over.

The squad will feature many of the players who have led the country to their position within the Asian game, but it could be a tournament too far for an ageing squad.

COACH: SALMAN SHARIDA
Former Bahrain international who steered local side Muharraq to the AFC Cup on two occasions, losing in 2006 before winning the title two years later.

KEY PLAYER: JAYCEE JOHN
Nigeria-born striker who became a naturalised Bahraini after spending his early career in the Gulf state.

SOUTH KOREA

High profile...Park Ji-sung

SOUTH KOREA'S seven consecutive – and eight in all – appearances at the World Cup mark the nation out as Asia's leading footballing nation, but there is till a perceived lack of success in the Asian Cup.

The South Koreans were the dominant force in Asian football in the mid-1950s, winning the first Asian Cup in 1956. Another Asian Cup title followed in 1960 before the country entered into a slump that only ended in the early 1980s.

Despite qualifying for every World Cup since 1986, they have fallen short at the Asian Cup, not reaching the Final since 1988, when they lost to Saudi Arabia.

That is a record, however, the current squad is determined to change with Manchester United midfielder Park Ji-sung committing himself to the tournament in Qatar and the task of lifting the 2011 title.

New coach Cho Kwang-rae, who replaced Huh Jung-moo after the World Cup, has gone public with his switch to a more possession-based game. And with the likes of Lee Chung-yong and Park Chu-young adding their experience, South Korea's hopes of ending their Asian Cup drought are high.

COACH: CHO KWANG-RAE
Highly accomplished at club level with a reputation for finding and nurturing young talent.

KEY PLAYER: PARK JI-SUNG
Asia's most successful footballer but yet to taste continental success with his homeland.

INDIA

Veteran...Bhutia

INDIA return to the finals of the Asian Cup for the first time since 1984 having secured their spot at the continental championships thanks to their victory in the AFC Challenge Cup in 2008.

India's hopes of success against the continent's best after so long away from the cutting edge of the Asian game rest on coach Bob Houghton's ability to drill his team as well as possible. However, results in the build-up to the tournament suggest that though improvements have been made, they may not be enough to stop India struggling.

Qualification has at least secured more funding for the development of the national team from the All India Football Federation, whose investment allowed Houghton and his team to embark on a six-month training stint that has seen them camped in Portugal and Dubai.

COACH: BOB HOUGHTON
Englishman who has become a mainstay of the Asian football scene over the last 12 years.

KEY PLAYER: BHAICHUNG BHUTIA
India's veteran goalscorer remains a major influence.

GROUP C FIXTURES

JAN 10	INDIA v AUSTRALIA
JAN 10	SOUTH KOREA v BAHRAIN
JAN 14	AUSTRALIA v SOUTH KOREA
JAN 14	BAHRAIN v INDIA
JAN 18	SOUTH KOREA v INDIA
JAN 18	AUSTRALIA v BAHRAIN

ASIAN CUP GROUP D

IRAN

Fulcrum...Nekounam

IRAN'S status among Asia's elite is unquestioned but in recent years the country's aspirations have not been matched by performances on the field as a golden generation of talent has slowly faded into retirement.

With former Bayern Munich attacking midfielder Ali Karimi quitting the international game, the wealth of high-profile talent that sustained Iran throughout a decade of success – including two World Cup appearances – has largely gone. However, the retention of Afshin Ghotbi, who replaced Ali Daei during the latter stages of the failed bid to qualify for the 2010 World Cup, has allowed for a period of stability as the former Persepolis coach has looked to replenish the squad with hungrier players.

Although Iran won the title on three consecutive occasions – in 1968, 1972 and 1976 – two of those were on home soil and they have not got past the semi-finals since.

Ghotbi's greatest task will be harnessing the natural ability of Iranians and turning it into a title-winning team. But the Asian Cup will be his final throw of the dice after announcing his intention to stand down from his position at the end of the tournament.

COACH: AFSHIN GHOTBI
An assistant of Guus Hiddink's when South Korea reached the semi-finals of the 2002 World Cup.

KEY PLAYER: JAVAD NEKOUNAM
Osasuna midfielder and the fulcrum of the side.

IRAQ

Winner...Mahmoud

IRAQ'S victory over Saudi Arabia in the Final of the 2007 Asian Cup has gone down in folklore as the war-torn nation overcame the odds to win a first-ever continental title.

The country's status among the upper level of the Asian game has long been established and they qualified for the 1986 World Cup, won the Gulf Cup on three occasions and finished in fourth place at the 2004 Olympic Games.

But with the country ravaged by factional fighting following the invasion by the US and its allies in 2003, winning the 2007 Asian title surpassed any of the country's other previous footballing achievements.

German coach Wolfgang Sidka signed a contract with the Iraq Football Association last summer and guided the team to the semi-finals of the Gulf Cup in December.

COACH: WOLFGANG SIDKA
Vast experience of the game in the Middle East after stints at various clubs as well as the Bahrain team.

KEY PLAYER: YOUNIS MAHMOUD
One of the most potent strikers in Asian football, he scored the winning goal in the 2007 Asian Cup Final.

UAE

Young star...Khalil

THE UAE's record at the highest level of Asian competition has been mixed, with the nation reaching the Final when the tournament was played on home soil in 1996 and qualifying for the World Cup finals in Italy in 1990.

Since those days the closest they have come to glory was winning the 2007 Gulf Cup under former Senegal coach Bruno Metsu.

Metsu stepped down from his position a year later and, after compatriot Dominique Bathenay fell short, the UAE FA turned to Srecko Katanec.

The UAE's youth teams have been excelling at Asian level in recent years, with striker Ahmed Khalil – winner of the Asian young player of the year award in 2009 – the shining light.

COACH: SRECKO KATANEC
Took over in mid-2009 after a stint in charge of Macedonia and qualifying his native Slovenia for the 2002 World Cup finals.

KEY PLAYER: ISMAIL MATAR
Player of the tournament at the Under-20 World Cup in his homeland in 2003.

NORTH KOREA

Hit man...Tae-se

NORTH KOREA'S return to the summit of Asian football has been relatively swift, with the country playing at the Asian Cup finals for the first time since 1992 and for only the second time ever.

The country's appearance at the World Cup finals in South Africa came as a shock after a self-imposed exile earlier in the decade. The North Koreans retreated into their shells in the mid-1990s after missing out on a place at the World Cup finals in the United States in 1994, a failure that was then followed by the death of the country's founding president Kim Il-song. His demise saw the country enter a period of national mourning for more than three years and, as a result, North Korea's isolation was enhanced.

North Korea are reigning AFC Challenge Cup champions and holders of the continent's Under-16 and Under-19 titles.

COACH: JO TONG-SOP
Assistant coach at the 2010 World Cup finals was set to take charge.

KEY PLAYER: JONG TAE-SE
Bustling Japan-born striker who was the focal point in South Africa.

GROUP D FIXTURES

JAN 11	NORTH KOREA v UAE
JAN 11	IRAQ v IRAN
JAN 15	IRAN v NORTH KOREA
JAN 15	UAE v IRAQ
JAN 19	IRAQ v NORTH KOREA
JAN 19	UAE v IRAN

KNOCKOUT STAGE

QUARTER-FINALS	
JAN 21	1ST GROUP B v 2ND GROUP A (W)
JAN 21	1ST GROUP A v 2ND GROUP B (X)
JAN 22	1ST GROUP C v 2ND GROUP D (Y)
JAN 22	1ST GROUP D v 2ND GROUP C (Z)

SEMI-FINALS	
JAN 25	WINNER W v WINNER Z
JAN 25	WINNER X v WINNER Y
THIRD-PLACE	JAN 28
FINAL	JAN 29

ARMENIA

Unstoppable Pyunik make it 10 in a row

REIGNING champions Pyunik, from the capital city Yerevan, made sure of their 10th consecutive league title on the final day of the season with victory away to Kilikia.

One point ahead of nearest challengers Banants, Vardan Minasyan's side made certain of the championship thanks to a second-half penalty from Marcos Pizzelli that rendered Banats' 2-1 victory over Shirak redundant. Pizzelli finished as the league's joint-top scorer, along with team-mate Gevorg Ghazaryan, on 16 goals.

"The players showed they deserve to be champions again and I give them full credit for that," said coach Minasyan, who is also in charge of the national side.

"Only true champions win their last four matches in a row when it matters the most."

The victory that really mattered was the third-from-last game of the season, when Pyunik, who were two points behind Banants, won 1-0 at home to the club who had led the league since June – a goal from Karlen Mkrtchyan seeing the holders leapfrog their visitors and go top of the table.

Bottom side Shirak, who are based in Gyumri, were handed a reprieve and will stay in the top flight following a decision by the Armenian FA to support the development of football in the country's second-largest city.

John Holmesdale

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pyunik (CL)	28	20	5	3	73	22	65
Banants (EL)	28	20	4	4	58	24	64
Ulisses (EL)	28	17	4	7	44	23	55
Mika	28	14	4	10	47	31	46
Impuls	28	10	7	11	29	43	37
Gandzasar	28	8	3	17	24	45	27
Kilikia	28	4	3	21	19	60	15
Shirak	28	2	4	22	22	68	10

(CL) Champions League, (EL) Europa League

All conquering...Minasyan

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
KARLEN MKRTCHYAN (Pyunik)
Midfielder who was an inspiration to the champions, who had a small first-team squad.

COACH OF THE SEASON
VARDAN MINASYAN (Pyunik)
Has now been involved in all of the club's 10 successive championships – four as a player and the last six as coach.

NEW COMER OF THE SEASON
VALTER POGHOSYAN (Banants)
After his fine displays for the national Under-19 and Under-21 sides, the league runners-up 18-year-old midfielder was promoted to Armenia's full international squad in October.

LITHUANIA

Ekranas at the double

COACH Valdas Urbonas led Ekranas to their third consecutive league championship, wrapping up their sixth in total with goals from Egidijus Varnas and Deimantas Bicka in a 2-1 victory over Siauliai in the penultimate game of the season.

"We won the first one in a fierce battle, last year we triumphed on the last day of the season and, despite what the points difference may suggest, it wasn't too easy this year either," admitted Urbonas. "We had ups and downs, and it was neck and neck the whole season."

Ekranas also beat Vetra 2-1 in the Lithuanian Cup Final to record their first double for a quarter of a century. But their coach was still not entirely happy, having seen his side exit Europe to HJK Helsinki in extra-time.

"We wanted to have a better run in the Champions League," said Urbonas. "We were unlucky [against HJK]. The players have been feeling the disappointment of that defeat all season."

Vetra had a dreadful season, being deducted six points before the start of the season for licensing irregularities, then a further three points for owing money to a former player and finally being expelled from the league due to their financial troubles. All their results were annulled.

Zalgiris, who returned to A Lyga after their own off-the-field problems, only lost out to runners-up Suduva – who had the league's top scorer in Povilas Luksys with 16 goals – on head-to-heads.

Former powerhouse FBK Kaunas, who have claimed the league a record 10 times, won all 27 of their games in the second tier this season and will return to the top flight next term.

John Holmesdale

A LYGA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ekranas (CL)	27	20	3	4	64	19	63
Suduva (EL)	27	16	8	3	56	16	56
Zalgiris (EL)	27	16	8	3	47	16	56
Tauras	27	14	5	8	41	27	47
Siauliai	27	11	8	8	37	28	41
Banga	27	10	9	8	34	30	39
Kruoja	27	8	11	8	41	45	35
Klaipeda	27	3	6	18	19	74	15
Mazeikiai	27	2	6	19	17	59	12
Atletas*	27	0	6	21	14	56	0

** Deducted 6 points for irregularities in the licensing process*

(CL) Champions League, (EL) Europa League

Uplifting experience...champions Ekranas hoist coach Urbonas

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DOMINYKAS GALKEVICIUS (Ekranas)
Performances in midfield for the champions earned him a first full international cap, against Ukraine in May.

COACH OF THE SEASON
VALDAS URBONAS (Ekranas)
Has won the league championship every year since taking charge of the club in 2008.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
TADAS ELIOSIUS (Kruoja)
Twenty-year-old winger who made his mark with the national Under-21 side.

BELARUS

Champions BATE break more records

BATE provided further evidence of their domestic dominance by claiming a fifth successive championship and completing a historic treble of league title, Super Cup and Belarus Cup.

"This seventh league win [in total] is quite unforgettable for us as we have now caught up with Dinamo Minsk's number of championships," said BATE chairman Anatoli Kapski. "But be sure – next year we will see them off. We are the clear leaders of Belarusian football."

The club from Borisov clearly have lofty ambitions, with president Alexander Lukashenko having committed £20million to building a new 13,000-seat stadium and coach Viktor Goncharenko proclaiming: "Are we tired from our wins? Definitely no. Every win, every league title has something special. The positive aura in our team makes us stronger and confident. We played extremely well throughout the season. Sometimes we were just fantastic."

The BATE success story also continued in Europe, where the club have qualified for the knockout stages of this season's Europa League.

Interestingly, Russian striker Aleksandr Alumona spent the first half of the year with BATE, and earned the right to be awarded a championship medal, before moving to Shakhtyor and playing enough games for his new club to warrant another medal with the eventual runners-up.

Minsk, inspired by 31-year-old skipper Andrey Razin, finished third and might have done even better had they not gone six games without a win at the tail end of the season.

Dinamo Minsk slipped from last year's second spot to fourth, largely down to coach Vladimir Golmak's inability to find the right blend of local players and foreigners in his squad. The introduction of six Brazilians had a negative effect on a side considered title challengers at the start of the season. They had problems off the field as well and were fined a Belarusian record £60,000 after fans displayed a Nazi banner during a game against Vitebsk.

Partizan Minsk, owned by Russian-Lithuanian businessman Vladimir Romanov, were relegated, possibly as a result of including too many inexperienced young players in their side. The introduction of quality foreign imports such as 31-year-old Senegalese defender Pascal Mendy and 27-year-old Brazilian midfielder Rafael Ledesma came too late to change things for the better.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Success...BATE celebrate a goal against Portugal's Maritimo in the Europa League

Triumph...Goncharenko

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
RENAN BRESSAN (BATE)
The Brazilian was the Vysshaya Liga's top scorer with 15 goals in his first season. He also managed nine assists and was named the league's best foreign player.

COACH OF THE SEASON
VIKTOR GONCHARENKO (BATE)
At the age of just 33, he led his side to the treble and confirmed his talent by also guiding them to the play-off stage of the Europa League.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
PAVEL NYAKHAYCHYK (BATE)
Disciplined and hard-working midfielder who, at 22, can create and score goals.

VYSSHAYA LIGA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
BATE (CL)	33	21	9	3	64	18	72
Shakhtyor (EL)	33	19	9	5	51	23	66
Minsk (EL)	33	18	6	9	59	32	60
Dinamo Minsk	33	17	5	11	49	34	56
Dinamo Brest	33	12	10	11	48	40	46
Belshina	33	12	9	12	31	42	45
Naftan	33	11	11	11	41	34	44
Dnepr Mogilev	33	11	7	15	40	53	40
Vitebsk	33	7	11	15	31	52	32
Neman Grodno	33	7	10	16	27	42	31
Torpedo Zhodino	33	7	7	19	33	58	28
Partizan Minsk (R)	33	5	8	20	24	70	23

(CL) Champions League, (EL) Europa League, (R) Relegated

Promoted: Gomel

RUSSIA Spalletti's Zenit claim championship

Warm reception...Italian coach Spalletti salutes the Zenit fans

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit (CL)	30	20	8	2	61	21	68
CSKA (CL)	30	18	8	4	51	22	62
Rubin (CL)	30	15	13	2	37	16	58
Spartak M (EL)	30	13	10	7	43	33	49
Lokomotiv (EL)	30	13	9	8	34	29	48
Spartak N	30	12	8	10	40	37	44
Dynamo	30	9	13	8	38	31	40
Tom	30	10	7	13	35	43	37
Rostov	30	10	4	16	27	44	34
Saturn	30	8	10	12	27	38	34
Anzhi	30	9	6	15	29	39	33
Terek	30	8	9	13	28	34	33
Krylia Sovetov	30	7	10	13	28	40	31
Amkar	30	8	6	16	24	35	30
Alania (R)	30	7	9	14	25	41	30
Sibir (R)	30	4	8	18	34	58	20

(CL) Champions League, (EL) Europa League, (R) Relegated

Promoted: Kuban Krasnodar, Volga Nizhny Novgorod

LUCIANO SPALLETTI celebrated steering Zenit to their second Russian title by pulling off his shirt in front of 22,000 fans in almost freezing temperatures at Saint Petersburg's Petrovsky Stadium.

The 51-year-old Italian signed a three-year contract in December 2009 with the focus on the club's forthcoming Champions League campaign, and the only significant defeat of the season – which saw an impressive 23-game unbeaten streak and a Russian Cup victory – was the one against Auxerre which knocked the team out of the Champions League in the fourth qualifying round.

However, the 2008 UEFA Cup winners, along with CSKA Moscow, have been hugely impressive in the Europa League, where they will be joined by two more Russian clubs in the next stage after Spartak Moscow and Rubin Kazan finished third in their respective Champions League groups.

Rubin finished third in the Russian league too. The 2008 and 2009 champions conceded only 16 goals in 30 games but were once again criticised for their defensive tactics, and it was CSKA's more impressive firepower that enabled the Red Army side to beat Kurban Berdyev's men in the race for second place.

The 2010 Premier League featured almost two full teams of Brazilians: 21 in total, the largest number of imported players. Spartak's Welliton was the championship's top scorer for the second year in a row, scoring 19 to the accompaniment of popular demands to grant the 24-year old striker Russian citizenship so he can play for the national team. His club partnership with fellow countrymen Alex and Ibson was impressive, though it was not enough to lift Spartak, who finished fourth, to the desired heights, either locally or in the Champions League.

The Brazilian who impressed the most, however, was CSKA's Vagner Love. Returning from his native land, where he had spent a year on loan with Palmeiras and Flamengo, the 26-year-old was voted the league's best forward alongside Zenit's Aleksandr Kerzhakov. Zenit's Portuguese star Danny was named the league's most valuable player.

Germany striker Kevin Kuranyi could have easily joined the list if his Dynamo Moscow partners had given him the same chances that Zenit and CSKA playmakers produced for their top scorers. The once powerful white-and-blues were stuck in seventh place, far from the Champions League berth. Overrun by Lokomotiv Moscow and low budget Spartak Nalchik, Dynamo did not get their chance in the Europa League either.

Alania Vladikavkaz and Sibir Novosibirsk find themselves back in the second division after just one season in the Premier League. Although Sibir can point to their success in the Russian Cup, where they only lost to Zenit 1-0 in the Final, the team from the country's most remote region had little chance from the start and found themselves relegated long before the end of the tournament – unlike Alania, who lost their place in the top flight on the very last day of the championship.

The two drop-outs will be replaced by Kuban Krasnodar, who are coached by ex-Romania defender Dan Petrescu, and the controversial Volga of Nizhny Novgorod, some of whose matches are currently under investigation by local football authorities after accusations that they were fixed.

At the end of the season, Russian football also saw a great celebration and a major scandal. The former was brought about by the victory of the country's 2018 World Cup bid and the latter caused by the disagreement over the newly adopted national competition format. The idea of having the season start in autumn and finish in spring in order to bring it in line with the majority of European leagues was supported by top clubs, but criticised by second division teams. The latter would prefer to go on playing in the summer and are concerned over the perspective of "winter" games for which they have no proper stadiums.

The disagreement led to the Russian Football Union withdrawing the rights of conducting the lower-league competitions from the rebel Professional Football League.

Victor Gusev

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
DANNY (Zenit)
The Portuguese playmaker, who joined from Dynamo Moscow for £25million in 2008, recovered from last season's injury and played a major role in the club's triumph.

COACH OF THE SEASON
YURI KRASNOZHAN (Spartak Nalchik)
Sensationally led underdogs Spartak to a place among the country's top six before resigning at the end of the season to consider his options.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
SEYDOU DOUMBIA (CSKA Moscow)
The Ivory Coast international formed an impressive partnership with Vagner Love in CSKA's attack after the World Cup.

Impressive...Doumbia

JAPAN Grampus claim their first crown

AT long last, Nagoya Grampus are the top team in Japan. Nearly 18 years since signing Gary Lineker for the start of the J.League, they walked away with the title with a 10-point margin over runners-up Gamba Osaka. Kashima Antlers, champions for the past three years, slumped to fourth place on the final day and even missed out on an automatic slot for next year's AFC Champions League, though they could still qualify via the Emperor's Cup.

This year, though, the story was all about the other European legend who joined Grampus in the 1990s and has now lifted the league trophy in his third year back as manager. A tempestuous, often brilliant player, Dragan Stojkovic has built a remarkably steady, resilient team that rarely sparkled but also never lost without winning next time out all season. The real magic, though, lay in turning draws into victories. Grampus drew only three times. They secured seven wins from games that were level going into the final 15 minutes and earned 16 of their 23 wins by a single goal. Stojkovic insisted that he always, always plays to win.

Grampus were spared both the physical burden of Champions League football and the mid-season, post-World Cup exodus that, among others, cost Kawasaki Frontale the services of Chong Tese and Eiji Kawashima. Antlers lost Lee Jung-soo and Atsuto Uchida, while Shinji Kagawa left Cerezo Osaka.

Consistency was the thing. Gamba and Cerezo both started weakly; Shimizu S-Pulse stormed through the first half of the season only to collapse in the second; Frontale were too uneven all year and Antlers had a poor summer without a single win in August.

Grampus did lose heavily from time to time and even won once by a big score – they conceded four each to Kashima, Kawasaki and Albirex Niigata, and won 5-1 at Shimizu – but it was all those narrow victories that mattered. Stojkovic calls it a victory of "faith and strong belief" and the figures bear him out. It was also a triumph for wise management at every level. Stojkovic describes the club's "intelligent, stable policy" as being exactly what it needed.

"The team was very well prepared for the battle and we learned a lot from mistakes in the past," says Stojkovic. "I feel a lot of emotion. I have been here 10 years, seven as a player and three as coach, and I'm very happy. This is a very important page in the history of Nagoya Grampus."

Power game...Keiji Tamada outmuscles two Shonan Bellmare defenders to score for champions Nagoya Grampus

Stojkovic also had one tempestuous, inspirational player, Tulio, who probably made the difference. Signed from Urawa Reds, Tulio was both a pillar of the defence and, whenever the horror of a draw loomed large, an auxiliary centre-forward. "We needed a player like Tulio to be champions," says Stojkovic. "His contribution has been very important, not only for the results but for the atmosphere in the dressing room. He is a leader."

The team had other outstanding individuals. Josh Kennedy was the league's joint-top scorer with Ryoichi Maeda of Jubilo Iwata. Seigo Narazaki also had a big role to play as Grampus faced more shots than any other team except bottom club Shonan Bellmare. Narazaki became the first keeper to be named J.League player of the year.

But centre stage really did belong to the manager. "Nagoya Grampus is like a second home," says Stojkovic, the J.League's Player of the Year in 1995 and now Manager of the Year. "I am very happy to give this present, this sweet cake, to the city of Nagoya."

Cerezo Osaka also deserve special mention for their third-place finish and Champions League qualification in their first season back in the top flight. Levir Culpi has built a vibrant, attacking team with the best goal difference and second-best defensive record in the league. They were anchored by central defenders Teruyuki Moniwa and Taikai Uemoto and holding midfielders Amaral and Martinez, while in attack they had the fluid running and deft, incisive passing of Akihiro Ienaga, Takashi Inui, Hiroshi Kiyotake and Adriano.

Everyone wondered what would happen when Kagawa, then the league's top scorer, left for Borussia Dortmund but Cerezo only got better. Keeper Kim Jin-hyeon received his first call-up for South Korea and the glorious 6-2 win over Jubilo Iwata, which lifted Cerezo past Antlers on the final day to secure their Champions League slot, looks a promise of still better to come.

Mike Plastow

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
SEIGO NARAZAKI
(Nagoya Grampus)
At 34 he is as impressive as ever, though he has now retired from international football.

COACH OF THE SEASON
DRAGAN STOJKOVIC
(Nagoya Grampus)
Led the club to the J.League title – something Arsene Wenger failed to do in his time at the club.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
TAKASHI USAMI (Gamba Osaka)
Just 18 years old but already a fixture in the Gamba side and attracting interest from abroad.

Champion feeling...Stojkovic

J.LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nagoya (CL)	34	23	3	8	54	37	72
Gamba (CL)	34	18	8	8	65	44	62
Cerezo (CL)	34	17	10	7	58	32	61
Kashima	34	16	12	6	51	31	60
Kawasaki	34	15	9	10	61	47	54
Shimizu	34	15	9	10	60	49	54
Sanfrecce	34	14	9	11	45	38	51
Yokohama	34	15	6	13	43	39	51
Albirex	34	12	13	9	48	45	49
Urawa	34	14	6	14	48	41	48
Jubilo	34	11	11	12	38	49	44
Omiya	34	11	9	14	39	45	42
Montedio	34	11	9	14	29	42	42
Vegalta	34	10	9	15	40	46	39
Vissel	34	9	11	14	37	45	38
Tokyo (R)	34	8	12	14	36	41	36
Kyoto (R)	34	4	7	23	30	60	19
Shonan (R)	34	3	7	24	31	82	16

(CL) Champions League, (R) Relegated

Promoted: Avispa Fukuoka, Kashiwa Reysol, Ventforet Kofu

BRAZIL Title goes down to the wire

Final effort...Corinthians' Ronaldo (right) goes past Matheus of Goias on the last day of the season

SERIE A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fluminense	38	20	11	7	62	36	71
Cruzeiro	38	20	9	9	53	38	69
Corinthians	38	19	11	8	65	41	68
Gremio	38	17	12	9	68	43	63
Paranaense	38	17	9	12	43	45	60
Botafogo	38	14	17	7	54	42	59
Internacional	38	16	10	12	48	41	58
Santos	38	15	11	12	63	50	56
Sao Paulo	38	15	10	13	54	54	55
Palmeiras	38	12	14	12	42	43	50
Vasco	38	11	16	11	43	45	49
Ceara	38	10	17	11	35	44	47
Mineiro	38	13	6	19	52	64	45
Flamengo	38	9	17	12	41	44	44
Avai	38	11	10	17	49	58	43
Goianiense	38	11	9	18	51	57	42
Vitoria (R)	38	9	15	14	42	48	42
Guarani (R)	38	8	13	17	33	53	37
Goias (R)	38	8	9	21	41	68	33
G Prudente* (R)	38	7	10	21	39	64	28

3pts deducted for fielding an ineligible player

(R) Relegated

Promoted: America Mineiro, Bahia, Coritiba, Figueirense

FOR the second consecutive year, the Brazilian Championship came to a desperately dramatic climax – this time amid far more controversy than Flamengo's win in 2009.

Three traditional teams were going for the title: Fluminense of Rio, Corinthians of Sao Paulo and Cruzeiro of Belo Horizonte. The fun and games started when the latter two met in round 35 (of 38).

Away from home, Cruzeiro had the better of proceedings but fell to a controversial late penalty. As a high ball came into the box, centre-back Gil clattered into the back of Ronaldo, who got up to coolly stroke home from the penalty spot – but not before Cruzeiro had kicked up a huge fuss about the decision and their midfielder Fabricio had walked off the field in protest.

Cruzeiro flew home to a heroes' welcome, amid mutterings of a supposed scheme to ensure that Corinthians would win the title in their centenary year. By the standards of Brazilian football it was probably a fair penalty – certainly it was an unwise challenge – but the margin for the conspiracy theories came from the current close relationship between Corinthians and the CBF, with the club's projected new stadium recently named as the venue for the opening game of the 2014 World Cup.

Talk of conspiracy died down somewhat a day later when Fluminense were awarded a far more dubious late penalty to save them from defeat at home to Goias.

Nevertheless, Flu's dropped points put Corinthians, who had been revitalised by the return of Ronaldo after a long injury lay-off, back in the lead. Clearly overweight and out of the action for long periods, the veteran striker still produced moments of genuine quality – such as the through ball which allowed Danilo to put Corinthians into the lead away to relegation-threatened Vitoria. Soon afterwards, though, Ronaldo limped off. The game finished 1-1, and Fluminense regained the lead – but not without more controversy.

A trip to face Sao Paulo is normally one of the most daunting tasks on the fixture list. However, the Sao Paulo fans were anxious the title did not go to their local rivals Corinthians and were therefore quite happy to see their side lose at home. The two sets of fans sat together, cheering together as Sao Paulo had two men sent off and Fluminense won 4-1.

As chance would have it, Fluminense were in the same situation a week later for the penultimate round, visiting Palmeiras, the main historic rivals of Corinthians.

In the build-up to the game Palmeiras fans tried to convince the players that they had an obligation to lose. During the game home keeper Deola was showered with abuse from his own supporters whenever he made one of his many saves. Fluminense won 2-1 and went into the final round a point ahead of Corinthians and two clear of Cruzeiro. All they had to do was win at home to already-relegated Guarani and the title was theirs.

It seemed a formality, but nerves were jangling. The team made a point of coming out late, ensuring their match kicked off some five minutes later than their rivals. But the players took far longer to work up any rhythm and, with the clock ticking away, fans of both Cruzeiro and Corinthians were entitled to keep dreaming – the latter especially after Ronaldo, recovered from injury, struck a shot against Goias which hit the inside of the post. Cruzeiro, meanwhile, had fallen behind against Palmeiras but were staging a comeback which would win them the game – and the title if their rivals were both held to draws.

But with just under half an hour to go, Fluminense made the breakthrough. Carlinhos crossed from the left, centre-forward Washington flicked on and Emerson steered a volley through the legs of his namesake in the Guarani goal. Coach Muricy Ramalho soon made a defensive substitution to guard against an equaliser and time was played out to the backdrop of exultant singing from the relieved Fluminense fans.

By this time the only match still being played was the crunch relegation battle in Salvador between Vitoria and Atletico Goianense. Gremio Prudente (who were known as Barueri the previous season), Goias and Guarani were already doomed to the second division, and this match decided who would join them. Vitoria had to win, but a packed home crowd went home distraught after the game finished goalless.

To add insult to injury, Vitoria went down while their historic local rivals Bahia moved in the other direction, back in the first division for the first time since 2003.

Tim Vickery

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DARIO CONCA (Fluminense)
Was so impressive that Flu fans started a campaign to naturalise him in order to play for Brazil – something that doesn't often happen to an Argentinian.

COACH OF THE SEASON
MURICY RAMALHO (Fluminense)
Added another league crown to the three consecutive titles he won with Sao Paulo.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
JUCILEI (Corinthians)
The 22-year-old was the pick of his side's new-look midfield.

Fourth title...Ramalho

USA Rapids take MLS title

THERE was plenty about the 2010 MLS season that was good. There was also some stuff that was bad. And sadly, right at the end, came the ugly.

The campaign climaxed with the MLS Cup Final, which was played in freezing weather in Toronto. To stage the league's gala game in the most northerly of the MLS cities in mid-November never looked like the brightest idea, but it did have the well-intentioned merit of rewarding the amazingly enthusiastic and faithful local fans who have filled the city's BMO Field for three years, rabidly supporting an embarrassingly poor team that has never made the play-offs in four seasons of play.

However, the big problem with the Final was not so much the weather, it was the football – or rather the lack of it. And this was not the fault of Dallas, the losing finalists, but of the winners, Colorado Rapids.

To get an idea of the Rapids' approach, you only needed to listen to the reaction of some of their players after their victory.

Defender Drew Moor: "We're a very blue-collar, hard-working group of guys. We don't necessarily have the most talent...but we got the ultimate award tonight."

Goalkeeper Matt Pickens: "We work our tail off, and whatever people think we lack for talent, we make up with effort."

Defender Wells Thompson: "That's the thing you can count on with this team, we're not going to back down from anyone."

And the Rapids management also joined in, with technical director Paul Bravo stating: "We are as blue collar as you get, but we have a great deal of spirit and belief. The way we played wasn't always great, but the guys dug in and they truly believed in themselves."

The Rapids got their 2-1 extra-time win courtesy of an own goal from Dallas defender George John, while their equaliser had come from their big bruising centre-forward Conor Casey who, during a frantic goalmouth scramble, scored from two yards while sitting on his backside.

Dallas did have their moments of attractive soccer – David Ferreira's opening goal was a beauty – but by and large they were swept up in an ugly, often spiteful game.

The Rapids, as it happens, have a partnership agreement with England's Arsenal. Coach Gary Smith was once employed by the Gunners and when he took over the Rapids job in 2008 he announced that his aim was to get them playing like the Premier League side. The London club's French manager Arsene Wenger even sent a good luck message before the game, but the scrappy, physical football was light years away from Wenger's team

The game did have one strong point: a rip-roaring ending.

After the Rapids went ahead with just 13 minutes of extra-time left, the game caught fire as Dallas attacked continually, and the Rapids defended sometimes with skill, sometimes with desperation and sometimes with luck to hold on and take the title.

Paul Gardner

In charge...Colorado's Pickens keeps Dallas at bay

Finalist...Ferreira

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DAVID FERREIRA (Dallas)
On loan from Brazilian side Atletico Paranaense, the Colombian scored eight goals and contributed 13 assists during the regular season.

COACH OF THE SEASON
SCHELLAS HYNDMAN (Dallas)
Replaced Steve Morrow in 2008 and led the club to their first MLS Cup Final.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
ANDY NAJAR (DC United)
Made his MLS debut in March last season aged just 17 and has attracted the attention of several European sides.

Rapid success...Colorado captain Pablo Mastroeni celebrates

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New York	30	15	6	9	38	29	51
Columbus	30	14	8	8	40	34	50
Kansas City	30	11	6	13	36	35	39
Chicago	30	9	9	12	37	38	36
Toronto	30	9	8	13	33	41	35
New England	30	9	5	16	32	50	32
Philadelphia	30	8	7	15	35	49	31
DC United	30	6	4	20	21	47	22

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Los Angeles	30	18	5	7	44	26	59
Salt Lake	30	15	11	4	45	20	56
Dallas	30	12	14	4	42	28	50
Seattle	30	14	6	10	39	35	48
Colorado	30	12	10	8	44	32	46
San Jose	30	13	7	10	34	33	46
Houston	30	9	6	15	40	49	33
Chivas	30	8	4	18	31	45	28

Play-off quarter-finals

Colorado v Columbus
1-0, 1-2 (aet)
(agg 2-2; Colorado 5-4 on pens)
Dallas v Salt Lake
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
San Jose v New York
0-1, 3-1 (agg 3-2)
Seattle v Los Angeles
0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3)

Semi-finals

Colorado 1 San Jose 0.
Los Angeles 0 Dallas 3

Final

Dallas 1 Colorado 2 (aet)

PEOPLE in the news

Resigned...Jol

EUROPE

Jol walks out on Ajax

MARTIN JOL resigned as coach of Ajax with the team fourth in the Dutch Eredivisie. The 54-year-old, who has also been in charge of Tottenham Hotspur and Hamburg, was temporarily replaced by FRANK DE BOER.

ROBERT Prosinecki has taken over as coach of Red Star Belgrade. The ex-Croatia and former Yugoslavia midfielder, a member of Red Star's 1991 European Cup-winning side, replaced ALEKSANDAR KRISTIC, who left the club after a poor run of form.

ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC says he will retire when his contract with Milan ends in June 2014. The Swedish striker, who will be 33 when his current deal expires, said: "How long do I intend to play? A maximum three [seasons]. One should stop playing when you are at the top."

Red Star hero...Prosinecki

Former Italy coach ROBERTO DONADONI replaced PIERPAOLO BISOLI as boss of Serie A strugglers Cagliari after they lost 1-0 to Genoa. Donadoni was previously in charge at Napoli, but was dismissed after just eight months.

ZINEDINE ZIDANE has been confirmed as an advisor to Real Madrid president FLORENTINO PEREZ on first-team affairs.

The three-time world player of the year, who played for Real between 2001 and 2006, said: "It's a role that's taking shape gradually. It's not like a new position, but for me it's as good as. I will try to work with the team, positioning myself between the president and the squad."

Former Arsenal and France midfielder ROBERT PIRES joined Aston Villa on a six-month contract. The 37-year-old, who was a World Cup winner in 1998, was a free agent after being released by Spanish side Villarreal in the summer.

CFR Cluj coach SORIN CARTU was sacked after he smashed the plastic window of the substitutes' bench during his side's 1-0 defeat away to Basle. A statement from the Romanian club said: "CFR Cluj can't admit to join its name to such a gesture. We apologize to UEFA, club Basle, our fans and all soccer's lovers for that."

SAMI HYYPIA of Bayer Leverkusen won Finland's player of the year title for a ninth time, to equal JARI LITMANEN's record. Esbjerg keeper LUKAS HRADECKY claimed the under-21 award.

Manchester United have signed 26-year-old Denmark goalkeeper ANDERS LINDEGAARD from Aalesunds on a three-and-a-half-year deal.

YURI SEMIN has been dismissed by Lokomotiv Moscow. The former Russia coach led the club to fifth-place in the 2010 Russian Premier League and a place in next season's Europa League.

Latvia captain VITALIJS ASTAFJEVS, Europe's most-capped player of all time, announced his retirement after making his 167th appearance for his country in the 1-0 defeat by China. The 39-year-old midfielder called time on his club career with newly crowned Latvian champions Skonto in October.

Retiring...Astafjevs

GIUSEPPE IACHINI, who led Brescia to promotion last summer, was sacked after a poor showing in the Italian top flight. He was replaced by former Siena coach MARIO BERETTA.

Almeria sacked coach JUAN MANUEL LILLO after their 8-0 La Liga defeat at home to Barcelona and replaced him with JOSE LUIS OLTRA, who has previous experience in charge of Levante and Tenerife.

Olympiakos winger DENNIS ROMMEDAHL was voted Denmark's player of the year for a second time. The 32-year-old first won the award in 2007.

Former left-back RUI JORGE replaced OCEANO CRUZ as coach of the Portugal Under-21 side.

Belgium defender JELLE VAN DAMME returned to his homeland and joined Standard Liege from Wolverhampton Wanderers for £2.5million. The 27-year-old failed to settle in England after moving from Anderlecht in June.

Scottish Premier League strugglers Aberdeen sacked manager MARK MCGHEE after a run of six successive league defeats, including the club-record 9-0 loss to Celtic. He was replaced by former Scotland manager CRAIG BROWN, who left Motherwell to take up the new post.

CHRIS HUGHTON, who took Newcastle United to promotion last term, became the first Premier League managerial casualty of the season. He was replaced by the former West Ham United, Charlton Athletic and Reading boss ALAN PARDEW.

New boss...Pardew

BRUNO LABBADIA replaced JENS KELLER as Stuttgart coach.

Former Soviet Union goalkeeper VLADIMIR MASLACHENKO died after a stroke at the age of 74.

Bologna president SERGIO PORCEDDA was suspended for six months and the Serie A side were deducted one league point for failing to pay tax on their players' salaries.

SHAMIL BURZI, a 25-year-old midfielder with Russian club Anzhi, was killed in a car crash.

Going back...Elano

SOUTH AMERICA

Elano returns home to Santos

Brazil playmaker ELANO will return to his homeland and join Santos from Galatasaray for £2.4million in January. The 29-year-old played for Manchester City before moving to Turkey.

A World Cup winner with Brazil in 2002, RIVALDO will return to his homeland next season to play for Sao Paulo-based Mogi Mirim. The 38-year-old left Bunyodkor of Uzbekistan in August after spells in Europe with, among others, Barcelona and Milan.

Having led Oriente Petrolero to the Bolivian clausura, Argentina-born coach GUSTAVO QUINTEROS has now taken charge of Bolivia's national team.

MANUEL KEOSSEIAN left his post as Penarol coach after just five months following a 1-0 defeat to Defensor Sporting.

LDU Quito defender GONZALO CHILA has been suspended for up to two years after an Ecuadorean tribunal found that the player, whose real name is ANGEL CHEME, had used the identity of another in order to sign for the club.

CONCACAF

Mexico's 2010 World Cup coach JAVIER AGUIRRE returned to club football as the replacement for JOSE AURELIO GAY, who was sacked by Real Zaragoza.

The body of kidnapped CARLOS MERCEDES VASQUEZ of Guatemalan first division club Malacateco was found chopped up and left in five plastic bags with a note saying he had been killed for "messing with other women".

Murdered...Vasquez

Cup winner...Oruma (left) after Guincamp's 2009 success

AFRICA

French coach HENRI MICHEL will be in charge of Equatorial Guinea until the end of the 2012 African Nations Cup.

PIERRE LECHANTRE was fired by a top Tunisian club for the second time in two years when Sfaxien terminated his contract after the 3-2 loss to Morocco's FUS Rabat in the African Confederation Cup Final. He had previously been sacked by Club Africain.

Al Ahly coach HOSSAM AL BADRI, who led his side to the Egyptian league title last term, quit after they lost 3-1 to Ismaily. Supporter unrest had been growing at the club ever since the African Champions League semi-final loss to Esperance in October.

Kenya coach JACOB MULEE resigned after his side lost 2-0 to traditional rivals Uganda to crash out of the CECAFA Challenge Cup in the group stage.

DENIS GOAVEC of France replaced JEAN-MARC NOBILO as coach of Benin's national side.

Former Nigeria international WILSON ORUMA, who was an Under-17 World Cup winner in 1993 and part of the Super Eagles side that won the Olympic title in Atlanta three years later, retired at the age of 33. He played for clubs in France, Turkey, Switzerland and Greece, and helped Guincamp win the French Cup in 2009.

Gor Mahia winger GEORGE ODHIAMBO was voted the Kenyan Premier League player of the year. BENJAMIN NYANGWESO, who led Ulinzi Stars to the title, was named coach of the year.

Congo-born BOB MUGALIA became the first foreigner to be called up by Kenya when he was named in their CECAFA Cup squad. The 19-year-old Sofapaka striker took advantage of the country decision to allow non-Kenyans to obtain dual citizenship under its new national constitution.

After taking just two points from their first nine South African Premier League games, Moroka Swallows parted company with German coach RAINER ZOBEL. He was replaced by GORDON IGESUND.

ASIA

Australia central defender SASA OGNENOVSKI was crowned Asian player of the year, while his South Korean side Seongnam Ilhwa were named club of the year. North Korea's JONG Il-GWAN was the young player of the year, with Japan's TAKESHI OKADA coach of the year.

Former Manchester United and England midfielder NICKY BUTT has joined South China in the Hong Kong First Division. The 35-year-old scored and also missed a penalty on his debut in a 2-1 win against TSW Pegasus.

Off target...Butt

At last...Yossi Shivhon celebrates Hapoel Tel Aviv's Euro success

100 victories in Europe for Sporting Lisbon following their 1-0 win over Lille

ENGLAND
Rooney back for Reds
Wayne Rooney made his first start for two months and scored the only goal of the game, away at Rangers, to send Manchester United through to the knockout stage of the Champions League.

ISRAEL
Six-year wait over
Two goals from Eran Zahavi and one from Douglas gave Hapoel Tel Aviv a 3-0 win against Benfica – the first Champions League group-stage victory for an Israeli club since 2004.

RUSSIA
Five out of five for pair
Zenit St Petersburg and CSKA Moscow are the only sides to still have 100 per cent records in the group stage of the Europa League.

Zenit made it five wins out of five with a 3-1 victory over

RESULTS

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

● *Match details for the final round of group matches will be in next month's issue*

Group A

Nov 24
Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Cambiasso 55)
Twente Enschede (Hol) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,466. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Inter: Castellazzi - Cordoba, Lucio, Materazzi, Zanetti, Stankovic, Cambiasso, Biabiany (Santon 80), Sneijder (Obiorah 87), Eto'o, Pandev (Biraghi 90+2).
Twente: Mihaylov - Rosales, Douglas, Wisgerhof, Leugers (Buysse 80), Brama, Janssen, Ruiz, De Jong, Chadli, Janko (Landzaat 70).

Nov 24
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 3 (Kaboul 6, Modric 45+1, Crouch 79)
Werder Bremen (Ger) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 33,546. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Tottenham: Gomes - Hutton, Gallas, Kaboul, Assou-Ekotto, Jenas (Palacios 19), Modric, Lennon, Bale (Kranjcar 81), Pavlyuchenko (Defoe 57), Crouch.
Werder: Wiese - Fritz, Mertesacker, Prodl, Schmidt, Bargfrede, Kroos (Ayik 55), Jensen (Pasanen 86), Hunt (Thy 79), Marin, Wagner.

Dec 7
Twente Enschede 3
Tottenham Hotspur 3

Dec 7
Werder Bremen 3
Internazionale 0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham	6	3	2	1	18	11	11
Inter	6	3	1	2	12	11	10
Twente	6	1	3	2	9	11	6
Werder	6	1	2	3	6	12	5

Group B

Nov 24
Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 3 (Zahavi 24, 90+2, Douglas 74)
Benfica (Por) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 11,668. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Hapoel: Enyeama - Bondarv, Douglas, Fransman, Ben Dayan, Vermouth, Abutbul (Badier 78), Yadin, Zahavi, Shechter (Shivhon 58), Tamuz (Sahar 66).
Benfica: Roberto - Pereira, Luisao, David Luiz, Fabio Coentrao, Salvio (Carlos Martins 65), Javi Garcia (Jara 79), Gaitan, Almar, Saviola (Cardozo 46), Kardec.

Nov 24
Schalke (Ger) 3 (Farfan 13, Huntelaar 20, 89)
Lyon (Fra) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 51,132. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Schalke: Neuer - Uchida, Howedes, Metzelder, Schmitz, Jones (Matip 70), Kluge, Farfan (Edu 65), Jurado (Deac 85), Raul, Huntelaar.
Lyon: Lloris - Reveillere, Diakhate, Lovren, Cissokho (Gomis 46), Toulalan, Gourcuff (Pjanic 60), Kallstrom, Briand, Michel Bastos, Lopez (Pied 74).

Dec 7
Benfica 1
Schalke 2

Dec 7
Lyon 2
Hapoel Tel Aviv 2

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Schalke	6	4	1	1	10	3	13
Lyon	6	3	1	2	11	10	10
Benfica	6	2	0	4	7	12	6
Hapoel Tel Aviv	6	1	2	3	7	10	5

Group C

Nov 24
Rangers (Sco) 0
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Rooney pen 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 49,764. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Rangers: McGregor - Whittaker, Weir, Broadfoot, Davis, McCulloch, Foster, Naismith, Hutton (Beattie 88), Weiss (Fleck 80), Miller.
Man United: Van der Sar - O'Shea, J Evans, Smalling, Fabio, Nani (Obertan 77), Scholes (Anderson 67), Carrick, Giggs, Rooney, Berbatov (Hernandez 76).

Nov 24
Valencia (Spa) 6 (Mata pen 17, Soldado 21, 55, Aduriz 30, Joaquin 37, Dominguez 78)
Bursaspor (Tur) 1 (Batalla 69)
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 31,225. **Ref:** Bruno Paixao (Por)
Valencia: Moya (Guaita 23) - Bruno, Ricardo Costa, Maduro, Jordi Alba, Tino Costa, Albelda, Joaquin, Mata, Aduriz (Dominguez 61), Soldado (Isco 71).
Bursaspor: Ivankov - Mustafa, Ibrahim, Omer, Vederson (Serdar 46), Insua, Ergic (Batalla 59), Svensson, Volkan, Sercan (Ismail 84), Turgay.

Dec 7
Bursaspor 1
Rangers 1

Dec 7
Manchester United 1
Valencia 1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man United	6	4	2	0	7	1	14
Valencia	6	3	2	1	15	4	11
Rangers	6	1	3	2	3	6	6
Bursaspor	6	0	1	5	2	16	1

Group D

Nov 24
Panathinaikos (Gre) 0
Barcelona (Spa) 3 (Pedro 27, 69, Messi 62)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 58,466. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
Panathinaikos: Tzorvas - Vyntra, Boumsong, Kante, Spyropoulos, Marinos (Dimoutsos 46), Katsouranis (Plessis 67), Gilberto Silva, Christodoulopoulos, Luis Garcia (Petropoulos 63), Cisse.
Barcelona: Valdes - Daniel Alves, Pique (Abidal 72), Puyol, Adriano (Maxwell 76), Xavi (Keita 71), Mascherano, Iniesta, Pedro, Messi, Villa.

Nov 24
Rubin Kazan (Rus) 1 (Noboa pen 45+2)
Copenhagen (Den) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,720. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Rubin: Ryzhikov - Kaleshin (Salukvadze 85), Cesar Navas, Bocchetti, Ansaldi, Noboa, Natcho, Gokdeniz, Ryazantsev, Kasaev (Bystrov 69), Kornilenko (Medvedev 81).
Copenhagen: Wiland - Pospech, Jorgensen, Antonsson, Wendt, Bolanos, Kvist, Claudemir, Vingaard (Zohore 73), Gronkjaer, N'Doye.

Dec 7
Barcelona 2
Rubin Kazan 0

Dec 7
Copenhagen 3
Panathinaikos 1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	6	4	2	0	14	3	14
Copenhagen	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Rubin Kazan	6	1	3	2	2	4	6
Panathinaikos	6	0	2	4	2	13	2

Group E

Nov 23
Basle (Swi) 1 (Almerares 15)
CFR Cluj (Rom) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 34,239. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Basle: Costanzo - Inkoom, Abraham, Ferati, Safari, Tembo (Zanni 90), Cabral, Yapi, Shaqiri (G Xhaka 87), Frei (Cagdas 90+2), Almerares.
CFR: Nuno Claro - Tony, Cadu, Piccolo, Rada, Culio (Sforzini 74), Tomas Costa, Kivuvu, Leo Veloso (Kone 58), Traore (Bjelanovic 46), Rafael.
Sent off: Piccolo 88min.

Nov 23
Roma (Ita) 3 (Borriello 49, De Rossi 81, Totti pen 84)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 2 (Gomez 34, 39)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 42,789. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Roma: Julio Sergio - Cassetti, Mexes, G Burdisso, Riise, Brighi (Totti 75), De Rossi, Greco (Simplicio 46), Menez, Borriello, Vucinic (Pizarro 82).
Bayern: Kraft - Lahm, Van Buyten, Demichelis, Pranjic, Tymoshchuk, Otti, Muller (Contento 73), Kroos, Ribery (Altintop 77), Gomez.

Dec 8
Bayern Munich 3
Basle 0

Dec 8
CFR Cluj 1
Roma 1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	6	5	0	1	16	6	15
Roma	6	3	1	2	10	11	10
Basle	6	2	0	4	8	11	6
CFR Cluj	6	1	1	4	6	12	4

Group F

Nov 23
Chelsea (Eng) 2 (Sturridge 51, Malouda 86)
Zilina (Slk) 1 (Bello 19)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,266. **Ref:** Schorgenhofer (Aut)
Chelsea: Turnbull - Paulo Ferreira, Ivanovic, Bruma, Van Aanholt, McEachran (Mellis 90+2), Ramires, Malouda, Sturridge (Anelka 74), Drogba, Kakuta (Kalou 46).
Zilina: Dubravka - Angelovic, Pecalka, Piacek, Gergel, Jez, Guldan, Bello, Vladavic (Rilke 90), Majtan (Poliacek 85), Oravec (Ceesay 65).

Nov 23
Spartak Moscow (Rus) 0
Marseille (Fra) 3 (Valbuena 18, Remy 54, Brandao 68)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 43,217. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Spartak: Dykan - Makeev, Suchy, Pareja, Stranzl, McGeady, Sheshukov (Drincic 75), Ibson (Ananidze 76), D Kombarov, Ari, Welliton.
Sent off: Welliton 64min.
Marseille: Mandanda - Azpilicueta, Mbia, Diawara, Heinze, Gonzalez (Abriel 76), Cisse, A Ayew, Remy (Kabore 82), Brandao, Valbuena (Cheyrou 69).

Dec 8
Marseille 1
Chelsea 0

Dec 8
Zilina 1
Spartak Moscow 2

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	6	5	0	1	14	4	15
Marseille	6	4	0	2	12	3	12
Spartak M'cow	6	3	0	3	7	10	9
Zilina	6	0	0	6	3	19	0

Group G

Nov 23
Ajax (Hol) 0
Real Madrid (Spa) 4 (Benzema 36, Arbeloa 44, Cristiano Ronaldo 70, pen 81)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 48,491. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Ajax: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Anita, Enoh, De Jong (Lindgren 76), Emanuelson, Suarez, El Hamdaoui (De Zeeuw 46), Sulejmani (Eriksen 88).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Arbeloa, Albiol, Sergio Ramos, Marcelo, L Diarra (Mateos 81), Xabi Alonso, Leon (Di Maria 65), Ozil, Cristiano Ronaldo, Benzema (Canales 82). *Sent off: Xabi Alonso 87min, Sergio Ramos 90+1min.*

Nov 23
Auxerre (Fra) 0
Milan (Ita) 2 (Ibrahimovic 64, Ronaldinho 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,244. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Auxerre: Sorin - Hengbart (Chafni 59), Coulibaly, Grichting, Dudka, Oliech, Pedretti, Ndinga, Birsa, Sammaritano (Quercia 65), Contout (Traore 82).
Milan: Abbiati - Abate, Nesta, Thiago Silva, Zambrotta, Gattuso (Strasser 90+2), Ambrosini, Flamini, Seedorf (Boateng 76), Ibrahimovic (Ronaldinho 85), Robinho.

On top...CSKA's Keisuke Honda

Anderlecht, while CSKA beat Lausanne 5-1.

SPAIN

Real inflict record loss

Real Madrid inflicted a heaviest-ever home defeat in Europe on Ajax with their 4-0 Champions League win in the Amsterdam Arena.

Real had Xabi Alonso and Sergio Ramos – who had one booking each to their name going into the game – sent off for picking up second yellow cards in the final few minutes of the match. The red cards meant both players missed Real's last, unimportant group game – at home to Auxerre – but will now start the knockout stage of the tournament with clean disciplinary records.

SWITZERLAND

Twins make history

Young Boys' winger David Degen and Stuttgart defender Philipp Degen, who is on a season-long loan from Liverpool, became the first twins to line-up against each other in a European competition as the Swiss side beat their German visitors 4-2 in the Europa League in Berne.

9 consecutive matches that Barcelona's Lionel Messi had scored in after his Champions League goal against Panathinaikos

Dec 8
Milan 0
Ajax 2

Dec 8
Real Madrid 4
Auxerre 0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	6	5	1	0	15	2	16
Milan	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Ajax	6	2	1	3	6	10	7
Auxerre	6	1	0	5	3	12	3

Group H

Nov 23
Braga (Por) 2 (Matheus 83, 90+3)
Arsenal (Eng) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 14,809. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Braga: Felipe - Miguel Garcia, Moises, Rodriguez, Elderson, Vandinho (Hugo Viana 90), Luis Aguiar (Madrid 80), Alan, Leandro Salino, Matheus, Lima (Elton 81).
Arsenal: Fabianski - Eboue, Squillaci, Djourou, Gibbs, Denilson, Fabregas (Nasri 69), Wilshere, Walcott (Vela 77), Bendtner (Chamakh 74), Rosicky.

Nov 23
Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 0
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 3 (Stepanenko 52, Jadson 59, Eduardo 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,473. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Partizan: Stojkovic - Stevanovic, Jovanovic, Krstajic, Lazevski, Petrovic (Medo 64), Smiljanic, Babovic, Moreira (Davidov 73), S Ilic (Iliev 84), Cleo.
Shakhtar: Pyatov - Srna, Chygrynskyi, Rakytskyi, Rat, Hai (Vitsenets 74), Stepanenko, Douglas Costa (Eduardo 62), Jadson (Alex Teixeira 75), Willian, Luiz Adriano.

Dec 8
Arsenal 3
Partizan Belgrade 1

Dec 8
Shakhtar Donetsk 2
Braga 0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	6	5	0	1	12	6	15
Arsenal	6	4	0	2	18	7	12
Braga	6	3	0	3	5	11	9
Partizan	6	0	0	6	2	13	0

Top two in each group qualified for 1st knockout round; the third-placed teams enter Europa League at 1st knockout round stage

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A
Dec 1: Lech Poznan (Pol) 1 Juventus (Ita) 1; Manchester City (Eng) 3 Salzburg (Aut) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City	5	3	1	1	10	5	10
Lech Poznan	5	2	2	1	10	8	8
Juventus	5	0	5	0	6	6	5
Salzburg	5	0	2	3	1	8	2

Group B
Dec 1: Atletico Madrid (Spa) 2 Aris Salonika (Gre) 3; Rosenborg (Nor) 0 Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Leverkusen	5	3	2	0	7	1	11
Aris	5	2	1	2	5	5	7
At Madrid	5	2	1	2	8	6	7
Rosenborg	5	1	0	4	3	11	3

Group C
Dec 1: Gent (Blg) 1 Levski Sofia (Bul) 0; Sporting Lisbon (Por) 1 Lille (Fra) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting	5	4	0	1	14	5	12
Gent	5	2	1	2	8	10	7
Lille	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Levski Sofia	5	1	1	3	5	11	4

Group D
Dec 2: PAOK Salonika (Gre) 1 Club Brugge (Blg) 1; Villarreal (Spa) 3 Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Villarreal	5	3	0	2	6	4	9
PAOK	5	2	2	1	4	3	8
Dinamo Zagreb	5	2	1	2	4	4	7
Club Brugge	5	0	3	2	3	6	3

Group E
Dec 2: BATE Borisov (Bls) 1 Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 4; Sheriff (Mol) 1 AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo Kyiv	5	3	1	1	10	6	10
BATE Borisov	5	3	1	1	11	8	10
AZ Alkmaar	5	1	1	3	5	10	4
Sheriff	5	1	1	3	5	7	4

Group F
Dec 2: CSKA Moscow (Rus) 5 Lausanne (Swi) 1; Palermo (Ita) 2 Sparta Prague (Cze) 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA Moscow	5	5	0	0	17	2	15
Sparta Prague	5	2	2	1	11	11	8
Palermo	5	1	1	3	6	11	4
Lausanne	5	0	1	4	5	15	1

Group G
Dec 1: Hajduk Split (Cro) 1 AEK Athens (Gre) 3; Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 3 Anderlecht (Blg) 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	5	5	0	0	15	6	15
AEK	5	2	1	2	9	10	7
Anderlecht	5	1	1	3	6	8	4
Hajduk	5	1	0	4	5	11	3

Group H
Dec 1: OB Odense (Den) 1 Getafe (Spa) 1; Young Boys (Swi) 4 Stuttgart (Ger) 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Stuttgart	5	4	0	1	11	5	12
Young Boys	5	3	0	2	10	9	9
Getafe	5	1	1	3	3	8	4
OB Odense	5	1	1	3	7	9	4

Group I
Dec 1: Metalist Kharkiv (Ukr) 2 Debrecen (Hun) 1; Sampdoria (Ita) 1 PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 2.

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines NOVEMBER 2010

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with the most votes make the overall team. For details of how ESM members voted this month, visit: **worldsoccer.com/esm11**

Winner...Doka of Lovech

BELGIUM

Anderlecht take over

Genk surrendered their lead at the top of the table with a 2-1 loss at 10-man Gent. They were overtaken by Anderlecht, who won 4-1 at nine-man Charleroi.

BULGARIA

Lovech march on

Defending champions Lovech went into the winter break top of the table and still unbeaten in the league this season after their Brazilian winger Doka Madureira gave them a 1-0 victory over Kaliakra – their eighth successive victory in the competition.

CYPRUS

Quick return

Anorthosis replaced their coach Guillermo Angel Hoyos with Slobodan Krcmarevic after a run of disappointing results, barely a month after Krcmarevic had himself been dismissed by Apollon.

DENMARK

Big gap at the top

Copenhagen remain a massive 19 points clear of second-place OB after beating strugglers Esbjerg 3-1 with goals from Dame Ndoye (two) and Zdenek

Back in favour...Krcmarevic

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	5	4	1	0	10	3	13
Metalist	5	3	1	1	9	4	10
Sampdoria	5	1	2	2	4	5	5
Debrecen	5	0	0	5	2	13	0

Group J

Dec 2: Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 3 Karpaty Lviv (Ukr) 0; Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 4 Sevilla (Spa) 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSG	5	3	2	0	8	3	11
Sevilla	5	3	0	2	8	5	9
B Dortmund	5	2	2	1	8	5	8
Karpaty	5	0	0	5	3	14	0

Group K

Dec 2: Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 1 Liverpool (Eng) 1; Utrecht (Hol) 3 Napoli (Ita) 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	5	2	3	0	8	3	9
Steaua	5	1	3	1	9	10	6
Napoli	5	0	4	1	7	9	4
Utrecht	5	0	4	1	5	7	4

Group L

Dec 2: CSKA Sofia (Bul) 1 Besiktas (Tur) 2; Rapid Wien (Aut) 1 Porto (Por) 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP L

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	5	4	1	0	11	3	13
Besiktas	5	3	1	1	7	6	10
Rapid Wien	5	1	0	4	5	10	3
CSKA Sofia	5	1	0	4	3	7	3

Final matchday: *December 15/16*

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round, in which they will be joined by the eight third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage

ARMENIA

● *See page 94 for final league table and season review*

AUSTRIA

Nov 13: Ried 2 Wiener Neustadt 0; LASK 0 Wacker 0; Mattersburg 2 Rapid 2; Austria 5 Kapfenberger 1.
Nov 14: Sturm 0 Salzburg 0.
Nov 20: Wiener Neustadt 0 Sturm 3; Salzburg 1 Mattersburg 0; Rapid 5 LASK 0; Kapfenberger 3 Ried 3.
Nov 21: Wacker 0 Austria 1.
Nov 24: Salzburg 2 Sturm 0.
Nov 27: Kapfenberger 1 Wiener Neustadt 2; Ried 1 Wacker 0; LASK 1 Salzburg 2; Mattersburg 1 Sturm 1.
Nov 28: Austria 0 Rapid 1.
Dec 4: Wiener Neustadt 1 Mattersburg 0; Sturm 5 LASK 0; Wacker 1 Kapfenberger 3; Salzburg 1 Austria 1.
Dec 5: Rapid 3 Ried 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ried	18	11	1	6	29	19	34
Sturm	18	10	3	5	36	17	33
Salzburg	18	8	6	4	20	12	30
Austria	18	8	5	5	28	18	29
Rapid	18	8	5	5	28	20	29
W Neustadt	18	8	4	6	25	24	28
Wacker	18	7	4	7	22	19	25
Kapfenberger	18	6	4	8	24	31	22
Mattersburg	18	3	3	12	14	33	12
LASK	18	2	3	13	12	45	9

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

BELARUS

● *See page 95 for final league table and season review*

BELGIUM

Regular season

Nov 13: Lokeren 3 St Truiden 0; Charleroi 0 Westerlo 1; Germinal Beerschot 0 Standard 1; Genk 3 Cercle Brugge 0; Club Brugge 2 Lierse 0.
Nov 14: Gent 1 Anderlecht 2; Zulte Waregem 1 Kortrijk 1.
Nov 20: Germinal Beerschot 0 Anderlecht 1; Gent 4 Westerlo 4; Charleroi 1 Genk 3; Lokeren 3 Mechelen 1; Lierse 1 St Truiden 2; Eupen 3 Kortrijk 1.
Nov 21: Zulte Waregem 2 Standard 0; Club Brugge 0 Cercle Brugge 1.
Nov 26: Genk 1 Gent 2.
Nov 27: Anderlecht 4 Charleroi 1; Standard 7 Lierse 0; Westerlo 1 Eupen 1; Cercle Brugge 1 Germinal Beerschot 1.
Nov 28: St Truiden 2 Club Brugge 1; Mechelen 0 Zulte Waregem 0.
Dec 3: Lokeren 2 Standard 1.
Dec 4: St Truiden 1 Kortrijk 0; Eupen 0 Gent 3.
Dec 5: Club Brugge 4 Westerlo 3; Zulte Waregem 1 Anderlecht 2; Germinal Beerschot 0 Genk 1.

BELGIUM – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	18	12	4	2	38	14	40
Genk	18	12	3	3	45	17	39
Gent	18	11	2	5	37	27	35
Lokeren	17	9	5	3	28	22	32
Standard	18	9	3	6	36	24	30
Club Brugge	18	8	3	7	37	27	27
Mechelen	16	7	5	4	22	20	26
Cercle Brugge	17	7	5	5	20	22	26
Kortrijk	17	7	3	7	19	18	24
Westerlo	18	6	6	6	24	25	24
Z Waregem	18	4	9	5	25	23	21
St Truiden	18	6	2	10	14	34	20
Germinal B	18	3	5	10	11	27	14
Eupen	17	3	3	11	20	32	12
Lierse	17	1	6	10	13	34	9
Charleroi	17	1	4	12	11	34	7

30-round regular season (15x2) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs, 7th to 14th will enter Europa League place play-offs, bottom 2 will enter rel/prom play-offs (1 of them will definitely go down)

BULGARIA

Nov 13: Levski 1 Akademik 0; Slavia 3 Montana 2; Sliven 0 Kaliakra 1; Vidima-Rakovski 1 Beroe 2; Lovech 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 0.
Nov 14: Cherno More 3 Minyor 0; CSKA 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0.
Nov 15: Chernomorets 1 Pirin 0.
Nov 27: Montana 0 Levski 3; Minyor 4 Sliven 1; Beroe 0 Cherno More 0; Pirin 1 Vidima-Rakovski 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 4 Slavia 3.
Nov 28: Akademik 1 CSKA 1; Kaliakra 0 Lovech 1.
Nov 29: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Chernomorets 0.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lovech	15	11	4	0	25	8	37
Levski	15	10	2	3	32	15	32
Lok Sofia	15	9	1	5	31	18	28
Chernomorets	15	7	7	1	12	7	28
Lok Plovdiv	15	7	5	3	27	14	26
CSKA	15	7	5	3	22	15	26
Slavia	15	7	2	6	25	20	23
Beroe	15	6	5	4	15	15	23
Cherno More	15	7	1	7	17	21	22
Montana	15	4	4	7	17	21	16
Kaliakra	15	4	4	7	9	19	16
Akademik	15	3	3	9	10	21	12
Minyor	15	3	3	9	18	30	12
Pirin	15	2	5	8	10	21	11
Sliven	15	2	4	9	12	22	10
V-Rakovski	15	2	3	10	12	27	9

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

CROATIA

Nov 13: Istra 1 Cibalia 0; Lokomotiva 0 Hajduk 1; Zadar 1 Rijeka 0; Inter 2 Varazdin 0; Sibenik 2 Karlovac 1; Osijek 1 Slaven 1; Zagreb 0 Hrvatski Dragovoljac 1; Split 0 Dinamo 1.
Nov 19: Inter 0 Karlovac 0.
Nov 20: Istra 2 Hajduk 0; Lokomotiva 2 Zagreb 0; Hrvatski Dragovoljac 0 Dinamo 6; Split 2 Rijeka 3; Zadar 3 Varazdin 0; Sibenik 3 Slaven 3; Osijek 1 Cibalia 0.
Nov 26: Lokomotiva 3 Hrvatski Dragovoljac 2.
Nov 27: Zagreb 0 Istra 1; Hajduk 2 Osijek 1; Cibalia 3 Sibenik 1; Slaven 0 Inter 0; Karlovac 1 Zadar 0; Rijeka 0 Dinamo 2.
Nov 28: Varazdin 0 Split 0.
Dec 3: H Dragovoljac 2 Rijeka 2; Inter 2 Cibalia 1.
Dec 4: Istra 2 Lokomotiva 1; Split 0 Karlovac 1; Zadar 1 Slaven 1; Osijek 0 Zagreb 0.
Dec 5: Dinamo 1 Varazdin 1; Sibenik 1 Hajduk 3.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	14	3	1	40	9	45
Hajduk	18	12	4	2	39	15	40
Cibalia	18	9	3	6	24	14	30
Inter	18	8	4	6	17	17	28
Split	18	8	3	7	21	13	27
Karlovac	18	8	2	8	17	16	26
Rijeka	18	7	4	7	22	26	25
Varazdin	18	6	7	5	16	21	25
Slaven	18	6	6	6	18	18	24
Zadar	18	7	2	9	23	24	23
Osijek	18	5	7	6	20	20	22
Zagreb	18	6	3	9	16	21	21
Lokomotiva	18	6	3	9	17	27	21
Sibenik	18	4	6	8	21	25	18
Istra	18	5	3	10	14	27	18
H Dragovoljac	18	1	4	13	11	43	7

30-round season (15x2); bottom 5 will be relegated

CYPRUS

Regular season

Nov 13: AEK 2 Ermis 1; Omonia 1 Anorthosis 0; APOP 0 APOEL 5.
Nov 14: Doxa 2 AEP 1; Apollon 1 ENP 0; Alki 0 Olympiakos 0.
Nov 15: Ethnikos 0 AEL 0.
Nov 20: ENP 0 AEK 2; Anorthosis 1 Apollon 2; Ermis 1 Ethnikos 1; AEP 1 Omonia 1.
Nov 21: APOEL 3 Doxa 1; AEL 1 Alki 0.
Nov 22: Olympiakos 1 APOP 1.
Nov 27: Apollon 1 AEP 0; Doxa 2 Omonia 3; APOEL 4 Olympiakos 1.
Nov 28: APOP 3 AEL 4; AEK 3 Anorthosis 0; Ethnikos 2 ENP 2.
Nov 29: Alki 0 Ermis 1.
Dec 4: ENP 0 Alki 2; AEL 2 APOEL 2; AEP 2 AEK 0; Olympiakos 1 Doxa 0.
Dec 5: Omonia 3 Apollon 1; Anorthosis 1 Ethnikos 1.
Dec 6: Ermis 1 APOP 1.

CYPRUS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	13	10	2	1	29	7	32
Omonia	13	8	3	2	22	12	27
AEK	13	8	2	3	21	13	26
Anorthosis	13	5	4	4	21	16	19
Apollon	13	6	1	6	20	19	19
Olympiakos	13	3	7	3	17	20	16
AEL	13	3	6	4	15	18	15
Ethnikos	13	3	5	5	14	17	14
Ermis	13	3	5	5	14	21	14
ENP	13	3	4	6	8	12	13
Doxa	13	3	4	6	13	21	13
APOP	13	3	4	6	12	22	13
AEP	13	2	6	5	15	17	12
Alki	13	3	3	7	11	17	12

26-round regular season (13x2) – top 4 will enter championship play-offs, 5th to 8th will enter "placement" play-offs, 9th to 12th will enter relegation play-offs (1 of them will be relegated). Bottom 2 (13th & 14th places) will be relegated automatically

CZECH REPUBLIC

Nov 12: Slavia 1 Ostrava 1.
Nov 13: Slovacko 0 Sparta 2; Plzen 1 Liberec 1.
Nov 14: Jablonec 3 Olomouc 2; Usti nad Labem 2 Brno 3; Pribram 1 Teplice 1; Bohemians 1905 1 Hradec Kralove 0.
Nov 15: Ceske Budejovice 1 Mlada Boleslav 3.
Nov 19: Bohemians 1905 1 Plzen 0.
Nov 20: Liberec 3 Usti nad Labem 0; Mlada Boleslav 3 Slavia 1.
Nov 21: Hradec Kralove 0 Slovacko 0; Olomouc 3 Pribram 1; Sparta 2 Ceske Budejovice 0.
Nov 22: Brno 0 Ostrava 2; Teplice 1 Jablonec 2.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plzen	17	13	2	2	43	16	41
Sparta	17	12	1	4	29	11	37
Olomouc	17	9	4	4	34	14	31
Jablonec	17	9	3	5	31	19	30
M Boleslav	17	8	6	3	31	21	30
Teplice	17	7	4	6	22	23	25
Liberec	17	6	5	6	24	21	23
Boh'ians 1905	17	6	4	7	19	20	22
Slovacko	17	6	2	9	17	27	20
Ostrava	17	5	4	8	19	23	19
H Kralove	17	4	6	7	12	19	18
Pribram	17	4	6	7	11	19	18
C Budejovice	17	4	6	7	13	28	18
Slavia	17	3	7	7	18	25	16
Brno	17	5	0	12	22	35	15
Usti	17	2	6	9	13	37	12

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

DENMARK

Nov 13: Esbjerg 1 OB 2; Midtjylland 2 AaB 2.
Nov 14: Randers 4 Silkeborg 0; SonderjyskE 3 Copenhagen 3; Nordsjaelland 2 Lyngby 1; Horsens 2 Brondby 1.
Nov 20: Lyngby 3 Randers 3.
Nov 21: Silkeborg 1 Esbjerg 1; Copenhagen 2 Nordsjaelland 1; SonderjyskE 0 Horsens 3; AaB 1 Brondby 2.

Pospech. Mikkel Vendelbo replied for the visitors.

ENGLAND

Chelsea and United lose

After keeping nine clean sheets in a row at home in the league to equal a club record, Chelsea lost their next Premier League outing at Stamford Bridge. The 3-0 loss to Sunderland was their heaviest home defeat since Roman Abramovich bought the club in 2003.

Manchester United leapfrogged the Blues to go top of the league for the first time this season with a 7-1 victory over Blackburn Rovers. Dimitar Berbatov scored five of the goals to become only the fourth player to achieve that mark since the Premier League began. However, United then surrendered first place to Arsenal when their game away to Blackpool was postponed because of the weather.

Cup shock...Carlton Cole (second left) scores for West Ham

In between, United suffered their first defeat in 30 games – and their heaviest loss for nine years – as they were knocked out of the League Cup in the quarter-finals 4-0 by bottom of the league West Ham United.

West Ham now meet Birmingham City in the semi-finals, with Arsenal and Ipswich Town contesting the other tie.

Nov 22: OB 3 Midtjylland 2.
Nov 27: Midtjylland 2 Silkeborg 1.
Nov 28: Esbjerg 0 Lyngby 0; Randers 0 Copenhagen 3; Nordsjaelland 1 SonderjyskE 1; Brondby 2 OB 0.
Nov 29: Horsens 0 AaB 0.
Dec 4: Copenhagen 3 Esbjerg 1; OB 6 AaB 0.
Dec 5: Nordsjaelland 2 Horsens 1; SonderjyskE 1 Randers 1; Silkeborg 2 Brondby 2.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	19	16	3	0	50	15	51
OB	19	10	2	7	36	28	32
Brondby	19	8	6	5	31	26	30
Midtjylland	18	8	5	5	31	21	29
Horsens	19	7	3	9	17	26	24
Lyngby	18	6	5	7	26	31	23
SonderjyskE	19	6	4	9	22	28	22
Silkeborg	19	5	7	7	24	31	22
Nordsjaelland	19	6	4	9	21	28	22
Randers	19	3	10	6	22	25	19
Esbjerg	19	3	8	8	22	31	17
AaB	19	3	7	9	18	30	16

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

ENGLAND

Tuesday, November 9

Stoke 3 (Huth 44, Fuller 71, Whitehead 85)
Birmingham 2 (Fahey 74, Jerome 76) Att: 26,381

Tottenham 1 (Van der Vaart 64)
Sunderland 1 (Gyan 67) Att: 35,843

Wednesday, November 10

Aston Villa 3 (Downing 28, Delfouneso 60, Collins 89)
Blackpool 2 (Harewood 45, Campbell 87) Att: 34,330

Chelsea 1 (Essien 30)
Fulham 0 Att: 41,593

Everton 1 (Beckford 90)
Bolton 1 (Klasnic 79) Att: 31,808

Manchester City 0
Manchester United 0 Att: 47,679

Newcastle 1 (Carroll 47)
Blackburn 2 (Gamst Pedersen 3, Roberts 82) Att: 41,053

West Ham 2 (Parker 43, Piquionne pen 50)
West Bromwich 2 (Odemwingie pen 38, Ibanez 71) Att: 33,023

Wigan 1 (Rodallega 52)
Liverpool 1 (Fernando Torres 7) Att: 16,754

Wolverhampton 0
Arsenal 2 (Chamakh 1, 90) Att: 27,329

Saturday, November 13

Aston Villa 2 (A Young pen 72, Albrighton 76)
Manchester United 2 (Macheda 81, Vidic 85) Att: 40,073

Manchester City 0
Birmingham 0 Att: 44,321

Newcastle 0
Fulham 0 Att: 44,686

Stoke 2 (Fuller 56, Jones 90)
Liverpool 0 Att: 27,286

Tottenham 4 (Bale 16, 75, Pavlyuchenko 42, Crouch 69)
Blackburn 2 (Nelsen 80, Givet 90) Att: 35,700

West Ham 0
Blackpool 0 Att: 31,194

Wigan 1 (Moses 70)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 16,085

Wolverhampton 2 (Foley 69, Fletcher 77)
Bolton 3 (Stearman og 1, Elmander 62, Holden 67) Att: 27,508

Sunday, November 14

Chelsea 0
Sunderland 3 (Onuoha 45, Gyan 52, Welbeck 87) Att: 41,072

Everton 1 (Cahill 89)
Arsenal 2 (Sagna 36, Fabregas 48) Att: 36,279

Saturday, November 20

Arsenal 2 (Nasri 9, Chamakh 27)
Tottenham 3 (Bale 50, Van der Vaart pen 67, Kaboul 85) Att: 60,102

Birmingham 1 (Bowyer 17)
Chelsea 0 Att: 24,357

Blackpool 2 (Varney 3, Harewood 44)
Wolverhampton 1 (Doyle 86) Att: 15,922

Bolton 5 (K Davies pen 18, pen 90, Lee 39, Elmander 50, 72)
Newcastle 1 (Carroll 52) Att: 22,203

Liverpool 3 (Johnson 18, Kuyt pen 27, Rodriguez 38)
West Ham 0 Att: 43,024

Manchester United 2 (Evra 45, Hernandez 77)
Wigan 0 Att: 74,181

West Bromwich 0
Stoke 3 (Etherington pen 55, Walters pen 85, 90) Att: 24,164

Sunday, November 21

Blackburn 2 (Gamst Pedersen 45, 66)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 21,848

Fulham 1 (Gera 70)
Manchester City 4 (Tevez 6, 56, Zabaleta 32, Y Toure 35) Att: 25,694

Monday, November 22

Sunderland 2 (Welbeck 23, 70)
Everton 2 (Cahill 6, Arteta 82) Att: 37,331

Saturday, November 27

Aston Villa 2 (Clark 52, 71)
Arsenal 4 (Arshavin 39, Nasri 45, Chamakh 56, Wilshere 90) Att: 38,544

Bolton 2 (Petrov 75, M Davies 88)
Blackpool 2 (Evatt 27, Varney 56) Att: 25,851

Everton 1 (Cahill 42)
West Bromwich 4 (Scharner 16, Brunt 26, Tchoyi 76, Distin og 87) Att: 35,237

Fulham 1 (Dempsey 53)
Birmingham 1 (Larsson 20) Att: 24,391

Manchester United 7 (Berbatov 2, 26, 46, 62, 70, Park 22, Nani 47)
Blackburn 1 (Samba 82) Att: 74,850

Stoke 1 (Etherington 90)
Manchester City 1 (Richards 80) Att: 27,405

West Ham 3 (Behrami 33, Obinna 55, Parker 74)
Wigan 1 (Cleverley 86) Att: 34,178

Wolverhampton 3 (Foley 50, Hunt 80, Ebanks-Blake 88)
Sunderland 2 (Bent 67, Welbeck 77) Att: 25,112

Sunday, November 28

Newcastle 1 (Carroll 5)
Chelsea 1 (Kalou 44) Att: 46,469

Tottenham 2 (Skrtel og 65, Lennon 90)
Liverpool 1 (Skrtel 41) Att: 35,962

Saturday, December 4

Arsenal 2 (Nasri 14, 74)
Fulham 1 (Kamara 29) Att: 60,049

Birmingham 1 (Gardner 80)
Tottenham 1 (Bassong 19) Att: 25,770

Blackburn 3 (Dunn 28, Emerton 43, Nelsen 55)
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 22,314

Chelsea 1 (Drogba pen 42)
Everton 1 (Beckford 85) Att: 41,642

Manchester City 1 (Tevez 4)
Bolton 0 Att: 46,860

Wigan 2 (Collins og 30, Cleverley 40)
Stoke 2 (Huth 18, Etherington 31) Att: 15,100

Sunday, December 5

Sunderland 1 (Henderson 33)
West Ham 0 Att: 36,940

West Bromwich 3 (Tchoyi 31, Odemwingie 70, 89)
Newcastle 1 (Lovenkrands 90) Att: 23,486

Monday, December 6

Liverpool 3 (Ngog 14, Babel 15, Rodriguez 54)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 39,079

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	16	10	2	4	34	18	32
Man United	15	8	7	0	35	16	31
Chelsea	16	9	3	4	30	11	30
Man City	16	8	5	3	21	12	29
Tottenham	16	7	5	4	24	21	26
Bolton	16	5	8	3	28	23	23
Sunderland	16	5	8	3	20	18	23
Liverpool	16	6	4	6	20	19	22
West Brom	16	6	4	6	23	27	22
Stoke	16	6	3	7	21	21	21
Blackburn	16	6	3	7	21	25	21
Newcastle	16	5	4	7	24	25	19
Blackpool	15	5	4	6	23	29	19
Birmingham	16	3	9	4	17	19	18
Everton	16	3	8	5	18	20	17
Aston Villa	16	4	5	7	17	27	17
Fulham	16	2	9	5	16	20	15
Wigan	16	3	6	7	13	28	15
Wolves	16	3	3	10	17	30	12
West Ham	16	2	6	8	14	27	12

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORERS

11 Dimitar Berbatov (Manchester United)
10 Carlos Tevez (Manchester City)
9 Andy Carroll (Newcastle)

ESTONIA

ESTONIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flora	36	29	4	3	104	32	91
Levadia	36	26	8	2	100	16	86
Trans	36	23	7	6	67	31	76
Kalju	36	18	8	10	59	42	62
Sillamae	36	18	5	13	79	52	59
Tammeka	36	11	7	18	50	66	40
Tulevik	36	8	5	23	33	62	29
Paide	36	6	7	23	30	79	25
Kuressaare*	36	7	3	26	32	93	24
Lootus (R)	36	6	2	28	22	103	20

Promoted: Ajax Lasnamae (3rd in 2nd level**)
Kuressaare beat Tamme Auto (4th in 2nd level) 4-2 on agg in the relegation/promotion play-off to stay up*
***The top two in the 2nd level, Levadia II and Flora II, were ineligible for promotion as they are reserve teams for top-level clubs*

FRANCE

Saturday, November 13

Bordeaux 2 (Sane 22, Wendel 90)
Nancy 1 (Alo'o Efoulou 83) Att: 22,030

Brest 1 (Roux 38)
Sochaux 1 (Brown 22) Att: 16,000

Caen 2 (El Arabi 40, Traore 88)
Lille 5 (Sow 25, 34, 45+1, Gervinho 90+1, Beria 90+3) Att: 14,997

Marseille 1 (Mbia 6)
Lens 1 (Eduardo 58) Att: 50,073

Monaco 0
Arles-Avignon 0 Att: 5,161

Montpellier 1 (Giroud 20)
Toulouse 0 Att: 15,175

Sunday, November 14

Auxerre 2 (Birsa 67, Quercia 86)
Rennes 1 (Kembo-Ekoko 70) Att: 9,089

Lorient 1 (Kitambala 32)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Nene 90) Att: 15,422

Lyon 1 (Pied 30)
Nice 0 Att: 36,672

Saturday, November 20

Nancy 2 (Andre Luiz 29, Vahirua 74)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 14,083

Nice 0
Montpellier 1 (Giroud 83) Att: 6,826

Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Hoarau 40, Erdinc 50)
Caen 1 (El Arabi 88) Att: 26,190

Rennes 2 (Kembo-Ekoko 39, Leroy 82)
Brest 1 (Grougi pen 90+2) Att: 28,879

Saint-Etienne 1 (Perrin 54)
Auxerre 1 (Mignot 28) Att: 21,830

Sochaux 2 (Maiga 42, Brown 58)
Lorient 0 Att: 9,266

Toulouse 0
Marseille 1 (A Ayew 88) Att: 30,256

Handful...Borussia Dortmund midfielder Mario Goetze

4 points separating the top 10 teams in Ligue 1

GERMANY

Dortmund set new best

Borussia Dortmund have set a new Bundesliga record for the most points collected after the first 15 games of the season. Their 2-0 victory against Nurnberg took them to 40 points, beating the previous best of 38 set by Bayern Munich in 2005. It also extended their lead at the top of the Bundesliga to 10 points.

The omens are looking good for Dortmund as they secured the lead at the mid-winter break. They have twice previously topped the table at this same stage of the season – and both times (in 1994-95 and 1995-96) they went on to win the title.

GREECE

Pana change boss

Former Porto and Malaga coach Jesualdo Ferreira replaced Nikos Noplias in charge of Panathinaikos. Noplias, who led the club to the Greek championship last term, was sacked after

In charge...Ferreira

Sunday, November 21
Arles-Avignon 2 (Meriem 22, Bouazza 89)
Bordeaux 4 (Modeste pen 34, 58, 87, Gouffran 39) Att: 9,285

Lens 1 (Akale 23)
Lyon 3 (Gomis 64, 72, Lopez 89) Att: 32,518

Lille 2 (Frau 39, Obraniak 78)
Monaco 1 (Adriano 56) Att: 13,554

Saturday, November 27
Bordeaux 1 (Rami og 51)
Lille 1 (Sow 34) Att: 26,066

Lorient 2 (Romao 61, Morel 86)
Rennes 0 Att: 15,362

Marseille 4 (Gonzalez 20, Cheyrou 28, Valbuena 64, Remy 90+2)
Montpellier 0 Att: 51,237

Monaco 1 (Park pen 75)
Nice 1 (Mouloungui 85) Att: 9,134

Nancy 1 (Vahirua 66)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Perrin 50) Att: 14,381

Valenciennes 3 (Pujol 19, Sanchez 77, Danic 83)
Arles-Avignon 0 Att: 9,829

Sunday, November 28
Auxerre 1 (Traore 55)
Toulouse 2 (Braaten 8, Santander 35) Att: 10,326

Caen 0
Sochaux 3 (Perquis 41, Brown 49, Maurice-Belay 62) Att: 13,420

Lyon 2 (Cissokho 53, Gomis 87)
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Nene 63, Hoarau pen 81) Att: 35,010

Tuesday, November 30
Brest 4 (Poyet 10, Baysse 18, Grougi 65, 79)
Lens 1 (Eduardo 43) Att: 14,500

Wednesday, December 1
Marseille 0
Rennes 0 Att: 50,057

Valenciennes 1 (Danic 76)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Riviere 15) Att: 10,940

Saturday, December 4
Arles-Avignon 1 (Dja Djedje 7)
Nancy 1 (Hadji 26) Att: 7,295

Lens 1 (Yahia 29)
Auxerre 1 (Mignot 87) Att: 27,147

Montpellier 1 (Spahic 79)
Lyon 2 (Lopez 4, 90+4) Att: 18,990

Rennes 1 (Montano pen 63)
Monaco 0 Att: 20,829

Sochaux 2 (Carlao 14, Maiga 54)
Valenciennes 1 (Sanchez 65) Att: 9,186

Toulouse 1 (Santander 66)
Caen 0 Att: 30,275

Sunday, December 5
Lille 6 (Sow 10, 48, 82, Baca og 17, Gervinho 57, Frau 87)
Lorient 3 (Gameiro 9, 45+3, Kitambala 57) Att: 14,410

Nice 1 (Fae 90+2)
Marseille 0 Att: 12,415

Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Nene 4, Bodmer 58, Giuly 77)
Brest 1 (Roux 54) Att: 28,058

Saint-Etienne 2 (Ebondo 66, Bocanegra 68)
Bordeaux 2 (Ben Khalfallah 30, Fernando 89) Att: 19,008

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lille	16	7	7	2	31	20	28
PSG	16	7	6	3	26	16	27
Rennes	16	7	6	3	17	11	27
Marseille	16	7	5	4	25	15	26
Lyon	16	7	5	4	22	19	26
Brest	16	7	4	5	19	14	25
Sochaux	16	7	3	6	27	19	24
Bordeaux	16	6	6	4	21	18	24
Toulouse	16	7	3	6	17	16	24
Montpellier	16	7	3	6	14	18	24
Saint-Etienne	16	5	7	4	21	19	22
Lorient	16	6	3	7	19	21	21
Auxerre	16	4	8	4	22	19	20
Nice	16	5	5	6	13	17	20
Valenciennes	16	4	7	5	18	17	19
Nancy	16	5	4	7	18	26	19
Monaco	16	2	9	5	15	15	15
Lens	16	3	6	7	15	27	15
Caen	16	3	5	8	16	26	14
Arles-Avignon	16	1	4	11	10	33	7

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Moussa Sow (Lille)
10 Youssef El Arabi (Caen)
9 Nene (Paris Saint-Germain)
8 Kevin Gameiro (Lorient)
8 Dimitri Payet (Saint-Etienne)

GERMANY

Friday, November 12
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Kagawa 49, Barrios 70)
Hamburg 0 Att: 80,720

Saturday, November 13
Kaiserslautern 3 (Micanski 58, Ilicevic 76, Abel 78)
Stuttgart 3 (Boka 19, Cacau 32, Gentner pen 50) Att: 46,904

Koln 0
Monchengladbach 4 (Bobadilla 51, 90, Bradley 70, De Camargo 82) Att: 50,000

Mainz 0
Hannover 1 (Pinto 44) Att: 20,000

St Pauli 0
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Renato Augusto 81) Att: 24,387

Werder Bremen 0
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 34,000

Wolfsburg 2 (Grafite 11, Dzeko 33)
Schalke 2 (Edu 39, Huntelaar 75) Att: 30,000

Sunday, November 14
Bayern Munich 3 (Gomez 10, 75, Lahm pen 57)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 69,000

1899 Hoffenheim 0
Freiburg 1 (Cisse 90+1) Att: 30,150

Saturday, November 20
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Vidal pen 45+2)
Bayern Munich 1 (Gomez 34) Att: 30,210

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
1899 Hoffenheim 4 (Vukcevic 31, Ibisevic 68, 69, Mlapa 89) Att: 44,300

Freiburg 1 (Hummels og 25)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Lewandowski 74, Mujdza og 77) Att: 24,000

Hannover 3 (Stindl 31, Schulz 58, Hanke 90+1)
Hamburg 2 (Son 40, 53) Att: 49,000

Monchengladbach 2 (Reus 53, 68)
Mainz 3 (Schurrle 63, Allagui 75, 88) Att: 45,472

Nurnberg 1 (Mak 66)
Kaiserslautern 3 (Rivic 4, Ilicevic 11, Lakic 33) Att: 40,711

Schalke 4 (Metzelder 21, Raul 45+2, 56, 70)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 61,673

Sunday, November 21
St Pauli 1 (Thorandt 28)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 53) Att: 24,150

Stuttgart 0
Koln 1 (Podolski pen 82) Att: 39,500

Friday, November 26
Mainz 3 (Schurrle 27, Noveski 54, Allagui 85)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 20,300

Saturday, November 27
Bayern Munich 4 (Tymoshchuk 29, 87, Muller 58, Gomez 61)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Gekas 33) Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 4 (Subotic 45+1, Kagawa 51, Grosskreutz 75, Barrios 88)
Monchengladbach 1 (Reus 32) Att: 79,200

Hamburg 4 (Trochowski 2, Pitroipa 29, Petric 35, Van Nistelrooy 59)
Stuttgart 2 (Marica 9, Gentner 46) Att: 53,055

Hannover 3 (Schlaudraff 15, Ya Konan 73, Hanke 89)
Freiburg 0 Att: 34,108

1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Ibisevic 37, Sigurdsson pen 90+4)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Sam 7, Vidal pen 9) Att: 29,250

Kaiserslautern 5 (Lakic 8, 55, Amedick 39, Ilicevic pen 76, Moravek 88)
Schalke 0 Att: 49,474

Sunday, November 28
Koln 1 (Novakovic 50)
Wolfsburg 1 (Cicero 81) Att: 43,000

Werder Bremen 3 (Hugo Almeida 1, 20, 63)
St Pauli 0 Att: 36,400

Friday, December 3
St Pauli 1 (Tiffert og 48)
Kaiserslautern 0 Att: 24,337

Saturday, December 4
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Russ 35, Gekas pen 83)
Mainz 1 (Schurrle pen 42) Att: 51,500

Freiburg 1 (Cisse 3)
Hamburg 0 Att: 24,000

Monchengladbach 1 (Bradley 19)
Hannover 2 (Hanke 72, Ya Konan 74) Att: 37,195

Schalke 2 (Jurado 58, Howedes 66)
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 61,673

Stuttgart 1 (Harnik 33)
1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Salihovic 11) Att: 36,800

Wolfsburg 0
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 30,000

Sunday, December 5
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Helmes 20, Barnetta 55, Reinartz 60)
Koln 2 (Geromel 26, Lanig 64) Att: 30,210

Nurnberg 0
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Hummels 23, Lewandowski 87) Att: 48,548

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Dortmund	15	13	1	1	37	9	40
Mainz	15	10	0	5	26	16	30
B Leverkusen	15	8	5	2	29	21	29
Hannover	15	9	1	5	22	23	28
Freiburg	15	8	0	7	20	23	24
Hoffenheim	15	6	5	4	29	19	23
Bayern	15	6	5	4	23	17	23
E Frankfurt	15	7	2	6	23	20	23
Hamburg	15	6	3	6	23	23	21
Werder	15	5	4	6	22	31	19
Nurnberg	15	5	3	7	18	26	18
Kaiserslautern	15	5	2	8	25	26	17
Wolfsburg	15	4	5	6	22	23	17
St Pauli	15	5	2	8	14	23	17
Schalke	15	4	4	7	21	24	16
Stuttgart	15	3	3	9	28	28	12
Koln	15	3	3	9	17	30	12
M'gladbach	15	2	4	9	25	42	10

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Theofanis Gekas (Eintracht Frankfurt)
11 Papiss Demba Cisse (Freiburg)
9 Edin Dzeko (Wolfsburg)
9 Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)
9 Hugo Almeida (Werder Bremen)
9 Srdjan Lakic (Kaiserslautern)

GREECE

Nov 13: Panionios 0 Atromitos 1; Kerkyra 1 Xanthi 1; Panathinaikos 1 Larissa 1; PAOK 2 AEK 1.
Nov 15: Asteras 0 Kavala 1; Iraklis 1 Aris 0; Panserraikos 2 Volos 2.
Nov 20: Volos 1 Asteras 1; Xanthi 2 Panserraikos 0; Panathinaikos 4 Iraklis 2.
Nov 21: Atromitos 1 Ergotelis 1; Aris 2 Kerkyra 0; Larissa 0 Panionios 1; Kavala 2 AEK 1; Olympiakos 3 PAOK 0.
Nov 24: Ergotelis 0 Olympiakos 2.
Nov 27: Ergotelis 2 Larissa 1; AEK 1 Olympiakos 0.
Nov 28: Volos 1 Kavala 1; Asteras 1 Xanthi 2; Panionios 1 Iraklis 0; PAOK 0 Atromitos 1; Panserraikos 1 Aris 0; Kerkyra 0 Panathinaikos 2.
Dec 4: Iraklis 1 Ergotelis 1; Panionios 0 Kerkyra 1; Panathinaikos 2 Panserraikos 0.
Dec 5: Xanthi 1 Volos 0; Atromitos 1 AEK 1; Aris 1 Asteras 0; Larissa 1 PAOK 2; Kavala 0 Olympiakos 1.

the 1-1 draw with Larissa.

Meanwhile, PAOK's run of four successive victories – and move from 14th to third in the table – which followed Ioakim Havos replacing Pavlos Dermitzakis as coach, ended with a 3-0 loss at Olympiakos.

HOLLAND

Twelve days to finish

Willem II and De Graafschap played a 33-minute rearranged match that saw the visitors triumph 1-0.

The game, which began on November 12, was suspended after 58 minutes with the score goalless due to heavy rain. Instead of replaying the whole game, both teams returned 12 days later to complete the remaining second-half minutes.

Unfortunately for Willem II, the defeat was their 13th in 15 Eredivisie games this season and left them adrift at the bottom of the league.

ITALY

Palermo for sale

Palermo president Maurizio Zamparini has put the club up for sale, claiming he feels "defeated by a world where the sporting values are more and more forgotten, and where the economic and media power of three or four clubs – who want to divide the scudetto among themselves – reign."

Defeated...Zamparini (right)

Zamparini bought the club in 2002 and they went to Serie A two years later.

Hernan Crespo scored his 150th Serie A goal in Parma's 2-1 win against Udinese.

"I remember them all, one by one," said Crespo. "The secret is having a lot of passion and desire to play. And it's been nice for me to come back to my home in Parma."

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	13	9	3	1	23	10	30
Olympiakos	13	10	0	3	26	6	30
PAOK	13	6	2	5	14	14	20
AEK	13	6	2	5	19	14	20
Aris	13	6	1	6	9	10	19
Kavala	13	5	4	4	13	11	19
Xanthi	13	4	5	4	12	15	17
Volos	13	3	7	3	14	14	16
Iraklis	13	3	7	3	11	12	16
Kerkyra	13	4	4	5	12	14	16
Atromitos	13	3	6	4	12	15	15
Panserraikos	13	4	2	7	11	17	14
Asteras	13	3	5	5	10	14	14
Ergotelis	13	4	2	7	11	19	14
Panionios	13	4	1	8	8	17	13
Larissa	13	2	5	6	10	13	11

30-round season (15x2); bottom 3 will be relegated. Teams finishing 2nd to 5th will enter play-offs for Greece's 2nd Champions League place

HOLLAND

Nov 13: PSV 4 Excelsior 2; NAC 2 Twente 1.
Nov 14: AZ 2 Ajax 0; VVV 1 Vitesse 5; NEC 1 Den Haag 1; Feyenoord 2 Heerenveen 2; Heracles 3 Groningen 0.
Nov 20: Excelsior 1 VVV 0; Vitesse 2 Heracles 0; De Graafschap 3 Roda JC 1; Twente 1 AZ 2; Ajax 0 PSV 0.
Nov 21: Groningen 2 Feyenoord 0; Den Haag 3 NAC 0; Heerenveen 5 Willem II 0; Utrecht 4 NEC 0.
Nov 24: Willem II 0 De Graafschap 1; Roda JC 1 Utrecht 1.
Nov 26: NAC 4 PSV 2.
Nov 27: AZ 2 Heerenveen 2; Willem II 1 Excelsior 1; Roda JC 1 Groningen 0; NEC 2 Twente 4.
Nov 28: Feyenoord 2 Den Haag 1; De Graafschap 1 Vitesse 1; VVV 0 Ajax 2; Heracles 2 Utrecht 1.
Dec 3: Groningen 4 Vitesse 1.
Dec 4: Ajax 1 NEC 1; PSV 5 Heracles 2; Twente 2 De Graafschap 0.
Dec 5: Willem II 1 Feyenoord 1; Utrecht 2 Heerenveen 1; Den Haag 0 AZ 2.

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	17	11	4	2	50	18	37
Twente	17	11	4	2	33	15	37
Groningen	17	10	3	4	33	22	33
Ajax	17	9	5	3	36	17	32
AZ	17	9	5	3	25	16	32
Roda JC	16	7	7	2	26	20	28
Utrecht	17	8	2	7	29	23	26
Den Haag	17	7	4	6	28	28	25
Heerenveen	17	6	6	5	30	24	24
NAC*	16	7	2	7	22	25	22
NEC	17	5	5	7	28	32	20
De Graafschap	17	5	5	7	21	33	20
Heracles	17	5	3	9	28	32	18
Feyenoord	17	4	5	8	22	33	17
Vitesse	17	4	5	8	20	31	17
Excelsior	16	4	3	9	19	30	15
VVV	16	3	0	13	15	34	9
Willem II	17	0	4	13	14	46	4

34-round season (17x2); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs
**1pt deducted for financial mismanagement*

ISRAEL

Regular season

Nov 13: Acre 3 Maccabi Tel Aviv 1; Kiryat Shmona 3 Netanya 0; Ashkelon 0 Maccabi Petah Tikva 1; Hapoel Haifa 1 Be'er Sheva 1; Bnei Yehuda 0 Ashdod 0; Ramat Gan 1 Maccabi Haifa 3.
Nov 14: Hapoel Tel Aviv 0 Beitar 0.
Nov 15: Hapoel Petah Tikva 0 Bnei Sakhnin 1.
Nov 20: Bnei Sakhnin 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 3; Netanya 0 Bnei Yehuda 0; Maccabi Petah Tikva 1 Acre 1; Beitar 3 Ramat Gan 2; Ashdod 1 Hapoel Petah Tikva 2; Maccabi Tel Aviv 0 Kiryat Shmona 1.
Nov 21: Be'er Sheva 1 Ashkelon 0.
Nov 22: Maccabi Haifa 0 Hapoel Haifa 0.
Nov 27: Ashkelon 0 Maccabi Haifa 3; Kiryat Shmona 2 Maccabi Petah Tikva 2; Acre 2 Be'er Sheva 3; Ramat Gan 1 Bnei Sakhnin 2; Bnei Yehuda 2 Hapoel Petah Tikva 0; Hapoel Haifa 0 Beitar 2.
Nov 28: Hapoel Tel Aviv 0 Ashdod 2.
Nov 29: Netanya 0 Maccabi Tel Aviv 2.
Dec 4: Hapoel Petah Tikva 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 5; Beitar 4 Ashkelon 0; Bnei Sakhnin 1 Hapoel Haifa 3; Ashdod 2 Ramat Gan 2; Maccabi Tel Aviv 2 Bnei Yehuda 0.
Dec 5: Maccabi Petah Tikva 2 Netanya 0.
Dec 6: Maccabi Haifa 3 Acre 1; Be'er Sheva 1 Kiryat Shmona 1.

ISRAEL – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
M Haifa	13	8	4	1	22	12	28
H Tel Aviv	13	8	2	3	28	16	26
Kiryat Shmona	13	7	5	1	27	16	26
M Tel Aviv	13	8	1	4	18	8	25
Be'er Sheva	13	6	4	3	17	14	22
M Petah Tikva	13	6	3	4	22	16	21
Acre	13	5	4	4	25	20	19
H Haifa	13	5	4	4	16	16	19
Ashdod	13	4	5	4	18	17	17
Bnei Yehuda	13	4	5	4	12	13	17
Netanya	13	4	4	5	16	17	16
Beitar	13	4	3	6	20	20	15
Ashkelon	13	2	4	7	9	25	10
H Petah Tikva	13	2	3	8	12	25	9
Bnei Sakhnin	13	2	2	9	9	24	8
Ramat Gan*	13	1	3	9	11	23	2

30-round regular season (15x2) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs, 7th to 10th will enter "placement" play-offs, bottom 6 will enter relegation play-offs (2 will go down)
**4pts deducted for contract irregularities*

ITALY

Wednesday, November 10
Brescia 1 (Diamanti 73)
Juventus 1 (Quagliarella 71) Att: 20,000

Cagliari 0
Napoli 1 (Lavezzi 90+4) Att: 15,000

Catania 1 (Lopez 60)
Udinese 0 Att: 12,418

Cesena 1 (Parolo 85)
Lazio 0 Att: 15,279

Chievo 0
Bari 0 Att: 8,822

Genoa 1 (Milanetto 81)
Bologna 0 Att: 21,913

Lecce 1 (Olivera 79)
Internazionale 1 (Milito 76) Att: 14,583

Milan 3 (Alexandre Pato 19, Ibrahimovic pen 77, Robinho 83)
Palermo 1 (Bacinovic 63) Att: 38,903

Roma 3 (Simplicio 45, Borriello 51, Perrotta 77)
Fiorentina 2 (Gilardino 69, D'Agostino 89) Att: 28,532

Thursday, November 11
Parma 1 (Bozhinov 84)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 16,009

Saturday, November 13
Fiorentina 1 (Gilardino 59)
Cesena 0 Att: 20,340

Juventus 1 (Iaquinta 35)
Roma 1 (Totti pen 45+3) Att: 22,869

Sunday, November 14
Bari 0
Parma 1 (Candreva 33) Att: 18,000

Bologna 1 (Di Vaio 58)
Brescia 0 Att: 13,000

Cagliari 0
Genoa 1 (Ranocchia 83) Att: 10,000

Internazionale 0
Milan 1 (Ibrahimovic pen 5) Att: 78,000

Lazio 2 (Zarate 15, Floccari 61)
Napoli 0 Att: 25,000

Palermo 3 (Pastore 33, 47, 85)
Catania 1 (Terlizzi 46) Att: 25,532

Sampdoria 0
Chievo 0 Att: 20,526

Udinese 4 (Di Natale 11, 24, 40, Floro Flores 55)
Lecce 0 Att: 14,000

Saturday, November 20
Milan 1 (Ibrahimovic 45)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 47,549

Roma 2 (Menez 24, Borriello 55)
Udinese 0 Att: 38,000

Sunday, November 21
Brescia 1 (Caracciolo pen 19)
Cagliari 2 (Matri 62, Conti 66) Att: 3,893

Catania 1 (Terlizzi 81)
Bari 0 Att: 11,573

Cesena 1 (Bogdani 24)
Palermo 2 (Ilicic 11, Miccoli 50) Att: 14,068

Chievo 2 (Pellissier 29, Moscardelli 82)
Internazionale 1 (Eto'o 90+2) Att: 19,268

Genoa 0
Juventus 2 (Eduardo og 18, Krasic 23) Att: 27,474

Lecce 2 (Di Michele 71, Diamoutene 83)
Sampdoria 3 (Pazzini 7, pen 39, 87) Att: 6,609

Napoli 4 (Maggio 2, Hamsik 37, 48, Cavani 74)
Bologna 1 (Meggiorini 68) Att: 39,626

Parma 1 (Crespo 23)
Lazio 1 (Floccari 45+3) Att: 17,470

Saturday, November 27
Juventus 1 (Pepe 81)
Fiorentina 1 (Motta og 3) Att: 21,740

Sampdoria 1 (Pazzini 58)
Milan 1 (Robinho 43) Att: 26,820

Sunday, November 28
Bari 1 (Caputo 64)
Cesena 1 (Colucci pen 61) Att: 15,182

Brescia 0
Genoa 0 Att: 3,532

Cagliari 3 (Matri 5, 14, Canini 28)
Lecce 2 (Olivera 54, Di Michele 80) Att: 8,000

Internazionale 5 (Stankovic 17, 18, 75, Cambiasso 22, Thiago Motta 71)
Parma 2 (Crespo 3, 36) Att: 49,787

Lazio 1 (Hernanes 45+1)
Catania 1 (Silvestre 44) Att: 22,451

Palermo 3 (Miccoli 19, Ilicic 60, Nocerino 64)
Roma 1 (Totti 90+2) Att: 29,597

Udinese 3 (Di Natale pen 15, 45, 57)
Napoli 1 (Hamsik 58) Att: 15,087

Friday, December 3
Lazio 3 (Biava 25, Zarate 51, Hernanes 88)
Internazionale 1 (Pandev 74) Att: 29,967

Saturday, December 4
Chievo 2 (Moscardelli 61, Granoche 83)
Roma 2 (Simplicio 25, 43) Att: 11,447

Milan 3 (Boateng 4, Robinho 27, Ibrahimovic 30)
Brescia 0 Att: 41,418

Sunday, December 5
Catania 1 (Morimoto 37)
Juventus 3 (Pepe 35, Quagliarella 43, 58) Att: 16,556

Cesena 0
Bologna 2 (Di Vaio 30, Britos 87) Att: 15,680

Fiorentina 1 (Mutu 52)
Cagliari 0 Att: 21,644

Lecce 1 (Ofere 45+2)
Genoa 3 (Toni 54, Ranocchia 75, Rossi 90+4) Att: 6,197

Parma 2 (Crespo pen 24, 54)
Udinese 1 (Di Natale 34) Att: 12,267

Sampdoria 3 (Pazzini pen 16, Guberti 56, 61)
Bari 0 Att: 20,869

Monday, December 6
Napoli 1 (Maggio 90+5)
Palermo 0 Att: 36,487

KAZAKHSTAN

One thing lacking

A goal from defender Mikhail Rozhkov gave Lokomotiv Astana their first-ever trophy as they beat Shakhter 1-0 in the Kazakh Cup Final.

Shakhter coach Askar Abildayev, whose team also lost in last season's Final, said: "Of course it hurts to lose, but I can't blame my players because we were not any worse than the other team today. The only thing we lacked was a goal."

MACEDONIA

Coach set to walk

Vardar coach Gjorgji Todorovski promised his players that he would walk the 180km back to the club's Skopje base if his bottom-of-the-table team won away at the second-bottom side, Pelister. After his side's 2-1 victory, Todorovski said: "I was prepared to go on foot immediately after the game, as far as I could get.

"I told the players, but at the last moment they took pity on me and did not allow it."

PORTUGAL

Hulk is spot on as boss remains unbeatable

A penalty from Hulk just

Penalty prize...Hulk scores against Setubal

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	15	10	3	2	26	12	33
Lazio	15	9	3	3	20	12	30
Juventus	15	7	6	2	29	15	27
Napoli	15	8	3	4	24	17	27
Inter	15	6	5	4	20	14	23
Sampdoria	15	5	8	2	18	12	23
Palermo	15	7	2	6	25	20	23
Roma	15	6	5	4	20	20	23
Genoa	15	6	3	6	13	14	21
Chievo	14	5	5	4	15	13	20
Udinese	15	6	2	7	17	17	20
Fiorentina	15	5	4	6	15	15	19
Catania	15	4	6	5	13	15	18
Parma	15	4	6	5	13	17	18
Cagliari	15	4	5	6	16	15	17
Bologna*	14	4	5	5	14	19	16
Brescia	15	3	3	9	11	20	12
Cesena	15	3	3	9	10	20	12
Lecce	15	3	3	9	13	31	12
Bari	15	2	4	9	10	24	10

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated
**1pt deducted for failing to pay tax on players' salaries*

LEADING GOALSCORERS

9 Edinson Cavani (Napoli)
9 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
9 Samuel Eto'o (Internazionale)
8 Marco Di Vaio (Bologna)
8 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Milan)
8 Alessandro Matri (Cagliari)
8 Fabio Quagliarella (Juventus)

KAZAKHSTAN

KAZAKH CUP

Final

Nov 14 - Astana
Shakhter 0
Lokomotiv 1 (Rozhkov 35)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 9,000

LITHUANIA

● *See page 94 for final league table and season review*

NORWAY

NORWAY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rosenborg	30	19	11	0	58	24	68
Valerenga	30	19	4	7	69	36	61
Tromso	30	14	8	8	36	30	50
Aalesund	30	14	5	11	46	37	47
Odd Grenland	30	12	10	8	48	41	46
Haugesund	30	12	9	9	51	39	45
Stromsgodset	30	13	4	13	51	59	43
Start	30	11	9	10	57	60	42
Viking	30	10	11	9	48	41	41
Lillestrom	30	9	13	8	51	44	40
Molde	30	10	10	10	42	45	40
Stabaek	30	11	6	13	46	47	39
Brann	30	8	10	12	48	50	34
Honefoss (R)*	30	7	6	17	28	62	27
Kongsvinger (R)	30	4	8	18	27	58	20
Sandefjord (R)	30	2	6	22	25	58	12

Promoted: Sogndal, Sarpsborg, Fredrikstad*
**Fredrikstad (3rd in 2nd level) beat Honefoss 8-1 on agg in the final of the relegation/promotion play-offs to go up – and send Honefoss down. Fredrikstad had beaten Lov-Ham (4th in 2nd level), and Honefoss had beaten Ranheim (5th in 2nd level) in their respective play-off semi-finals*

NORWEGIAN CUP

Final

Nov 14 - Oslo
Follo 0
Stromsgodset 2 (Kamara 30, Andersen 42)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 24,532. **Ref:** Hagen

POLAND

Nov 10: Lech 2 Polonia Warsaw 2.
Nov 12: Widzew 2 Cracovia 2; Wisla 4 Legia 0.
Nov 13: Polonia Bytom 2 Arka 0; Slask 4 Gornik 0; Lech 2 Lechia 0; Polonia Warsaw 3 Ruch 1.
Nov 14: Zaglebie 1 Belchatow 1; Korona 1 Jagiellonia 1.
Nov 19: Legia 3 Arka 0; Gornik 2 Korona 1.
Nov 20: Slask 2 Ruch 1; Lechia 3 Widzew 1; Lech 1 Polonia Bytom 0; Jagiellonia 4 Cracovia 2.
Nov 21: Wisla 1 Zaglebie 0; Belchatow 3 Polonia Warsaw 2.
Nov 26: Cracovia 3 Belchatow 2; Polonia Bytom 0 Legia 1.
Nov 27: Arka 2 Slask 2; Zaglebie 3 Lechia 1; Korona 0 Lech 0; Widzew 4 Gornik 0.
Nov 28: Polonia Warsaw 0 Wisla 1; Ruch 0 Jagiellonia 0.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jagiellonia	15	9	3	3	22	13	30
Wisla	15	8	3	4	21	15	27
Legia	15	9	0	6	19	19	27
Korona	15	7	4	4	20	17	25
Belchatow	15	7	2	6	19	18	23
Lechia	15	7	2	6	22	18	23
Gornik	15	7	1	7	15	25	22
Polonia W	15	5	5	5	23	18	20
Slask	15	5	5	5	21	20	20
Zaglebie	15	5	4	6	13	16	19
Lech	15	5	4	6	18	14	19
Widzew	15	4	6	5	23	18	18
Polonia B	15	4	5	6	13	16	17
Ruch	15	4	5	6	12	14	17
Arka	15	4	5	6	9	14	17
Cracovia	15	2	2	11	16	31	8

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

PORTUGAL

Nov 12: Nacional 0 Maritimo 0.
Nov 13: Guimaraes 2 Braga 1; Academica 1 Sporting 2.
Nov 14: Olhanense 1 Beira Mar 1; Uniao Leiria 1 Setubal 0; Rio Ave 3 Pacos Ferreira 1; Benfica 4 Naval 0; Porto 2 Portimonense 0.
Nov 26: Setubal 0 Academica 1.
Nov 27: Pacos Ferreira 1 Olhanense 0; Maritimo 2 Guimaraes 0; Sporting 1 Porto 1.
Nov 28: Naval 0 Rio Ave 1; Beira Mar 1 Benfica 3; Braga 2 Nacional 0.
Nov 29: Portimonense 1 Uniao Leiria 2.
Dec 3: Benfica 2 Olhanense 0.
Dec 4: Guimaraes 1 Pacos Ferreira 1; Uniao Leiria 3 Braga 1.
Dec 5: Rio Ave 1 Beira Mar 1; Portimonense 1 Sporting 3.
Dec 6: Porto 1 Setubal 0.

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	13	11	2	0	29	5	35
Benfica	13	9	0	4	22	12	27
Sporting	13	6	4	3	17	13	22
Guimaraes	13	6	4	3	17	14	22
Uniao Leiria	13	6	3	4	14	14	21
Academica	12	5	3	4	19	15	18
Braga	13	5	2	6	20	19	17
Nacional	12	5	2	5	12	14	17
Beira Mar	13	3	7	3	14	16	16
Olhanense	13	3	6	4	11	13	15
P Ferreira	13	3	6	4	12	15	15
Rio Ave	13	3	5	5	13	15	14
Setubal	13	3	4	6	8	14	13
Maritimo	12	2	6	4	7	8	12
Portimonense	13	2	2	9	12	24	8
Naval	12	1	2	9	6	22	5

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

FAI CUP

Final

Nov 14 - Dublin
Sligo Rovers 0
Shamrock Rovers 0
Aet. **Att:** 36,101. **Ref:** Connolly
Sligo 2-0 on pens
Sent off: Bradley (Shamrock) 111min

ROMANIA

Nov 12: Otelul 1 Victoria 1; Vaslui 0 Astra 0.
Nov 13: Univ Cluj 1 Pandurii 1; Urziceni 1 Timisoara 1; Brasov 2 Sportul 0.
Nov 14: Tirgu-Mures 1 Rapid 0; Steaua 0 Gaz Metan 1; Dinamo 2 Univ Craiova 2.
Nov 15: Gloria 0 CFR 3.
Nov 19: Pandurii 2 Brasov 1; CFR 1 Gaz Metan 1; Rapid 3 Univ Cluj 0.
Nov 20: Tirgu-Mures 0 Steaua 1; U Craiova 1 Gloria 2.
Nov 21: Sportul 0 Vaslui 1; Timisoara 2 Otelul 0.
Nov 22: Astra 1 Urziceni 0; Victoria 2 Dinamo 4.
Nov 26: Urziceni 2 Sportul 1; Vaslui 3 Pandurii 1.
Nov 27: Otelul 2 Astra 1; Brasov 2 Rapid 0; Dinamo 0 Timisoara 0.
Nov 28: Univ Cluj 1 Tirgu-Mures 1; Steaua 2 CFR 2.
Nov 29: Gloria 1 Victoria 0; Gaz Metan 1 Univ Craiova 0.
Dec 3: Gaz Metan 2 Victoria 2; Brasov 1 Tirgu-Mures 1; CFR 2 Univ Craiova 1.
Dec 4: Gloria 3 Timisoara 3; Dinamo 2 Astra 2.
Dec 5: Otelul 1 Sportul 0; Vaslui 1 Rapid 1.
Dec 6: Urziceni 1 Pandurii 1; Steaua 3 Univ Cluj 0.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Otelul	18	12	3	3	23	14	39
Timisoara	18	8	10	0	30	21	34
Vaslui	18	9	5	4	25	18	32
Rapid	18	8	6	4	28	12	30
Gaz Metan	18	8	6	4	23	16	30
Dinamo	18	8	5	5	40	31	29
Steaua	18	8	5	5	25	16	29
CFR	18	7	6	5	30	24	27
Astra	18	4	9	5	19	20	21
Univ Craiova	18	5	5	8	23	21	20
Gloria	18	5	5	8	21	26	20
Brasov	18	4	8	6	16	22	20
Tirgu-Mures	18	5	5	8	19	28	20
Univ Cluj	18	5	5	8	21	33	20
Victoria	18	4	6	8	24	32	18
Pandurii	18	4	6	8	17	25	18
Urziceni	18	4	6	8	12	22	18
Sportul	18	3	1	14	19	34	10

34-round season (17x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

RUSSIA

Nov 10: Zenit 1 CSKA 3.
Nov 12: Saturn 2 Amkar 2.
Nov 13: Tom 1 Alania 1; Terek 1 Anzhi 3; Dynamo 2 Rubin 2.
Nov 14: Spartak Nalchik 1 CSKA 1; Zenit 5 Rostov 0; Lokomotiv 1 Sibir 1; Spartak Moscow 0 Krylia Sovetov 0.
Nov 20: CSKA 3 Spartak Moscow 1; Anzhi 1 Saturn 2; Alania 2 Terek 1; Amkar 3 Spartak Nalchik 1; Rostov 1 Lokomotiv 2; Krylia Sovetov 1 Dynamo 0; Rubin 2 Zenit 2; Sibir 0 Tom 1.
Nov 28: Terek 1 Sibir 1; Saturn 1 Alania 1; Lokomotiv 0 Rubin 0; Tom 3 Rostov 1; Spartak Nalchik 1 Anzhi 3; Dynamo 1 Spartak Moscow 1; Zenit 0 Krylia Sovetov 0; Amkar 0 CSKA 0.

RUSSIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	30	20	8	2	61	21	68
CSKA	30	18	8	4	51	22	62
Rubin	30	15	13	2	37	16	58
Spartak M	30	13	10	7	43	33	49
Lokomotiv	30	13	9	8	34	29	48
Spartak N	30	12	8	10	40	37	44
Dynamo	30	9	13	8	38	31	40
Tom	30	10	7	13	35	43	37
Rostov	30	10	4	16	27	44	34
Saturn	30	8	10	12	27	38	34
Anzhi	30	9	6	15	29	39	33
Terek	30	8	9	13	28	34	33
Krylia Sovetov	30	7	10	13	28	40	31
Amkar	30	8	6	16	24	35	30
Alania (R)	30	7	9	14	25	41	30
Sibir (R)	30	4	8	18	34	58	20

Promoted: Kuban Krasnodar, Volga Nizhny Novgorod

SCOTLAND

Regular season

Nov 9: Aberdeen 1 Inverness 2.
Nov 10: Hearts 2 Celtic 0; Rangers 0 Hibernian 3; Motherwell 4 St Johnstone 0; Kilmarnock 3 Hamilton 0; Dundee United 1 St Mirren 2.
Nov 13: Rangers 2 Aberdeen 0; Hibernian 2 Motherwell 1; Hamilton 1 Inverness 3; Dundee United 1 Kilmarnock 1; St Johnstone 0 Hearts 2.
Nov 14: St Mirren 0 Celtic 1.
Nov 20: Kilmarnock 2 Rangers 3; Hearts 2 Hamilton 0; Aberdeen 0 St Johnstone 1; Celtic 1 Dundee United 1; Inverness 4 Hibernian 2; St Mirren 1 Motherwell 1.
Nov 27: Celtic 2 Inverness 2; Hamilton 0 St Mirren 0; Hibernian 0 St Johnstone 0; Kilmarnock 2 Aberdeen 0.

SCOTLAND – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	14	12	1	1	34	15	37
Celtic	15	11	2	2	35	12	35
Hearts	14	8	2	4	22	13	26
Inverness	15	7	4	4	26	18	25
Motherwell	14	7	2	5	22	16	23
Kilmarnock	15	6	2	7	24	18	20
Dundee Utd	14	5	4	5	15	20	19
Hibernian	15	4	3	8	17	25	15
St Johnstone	15	4	3	8	10	22	15
St Mirren	15	3	4	8	14	26	13
Aberdeen	15	3	1	11	15	31	10
Hamilton	15	2	4	9	11	29	10

33-round regular season (11x3) – top 6 will form championship group, bottom 6 will form relegation group (1 will be relegated)

before half-time kept Porto eight points clear of Benfica at the top of the league with a 1-0 win at home to Setubal.

The result also meant that *Os Dragoes'* 33-year-old coach Andre Villas-Boas is still yet to lose a single game since taking charge of the club last summer.

SERBIA

Partizan cash in

Red Star and Vojvodina shared the points in a 2-2 draw that allowed Partizan to increase their lead over their two closest challengers at the top of the table to five points.

The reigning champions took full advantage, beating Sevojno 5-2 with goals from Cleo (two), Radoslav Petrovic, Stefan Babovic and Ivica Iliev.

SPAIN

Messi scoring for fun

Lionel Messi helped himself to a hat-trick as Barcelona equalled the record for La Liga's best away victory with an 8-0 thrashing of Almeria, a result that stretched the Andalusian side's winless run to seven home games.

Messi and Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo have both scored more than a goal a game in the league this term.

Hat-trick...Messi

36 total number of goals conceded in *clasico* matches against Barcelona by Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas

SERBIA

Nov 13: Indjija 1 Metalac 0; Sloboda Sevojno 4 Cukaricki 0; OFK 0 Jagodina 1; Borac 0 Smederevo 1; Partizan 4 Javor 1.
Nov 14: Hajduk 0 BSK 1; Rad 0 Red Star 1; Spartak 0 Vojvodina 1.
Nov 20: Metalac 3 Sloboda Sevojno 2; Cukaricki 2 Partizan 4; Javor 0 Hajduk 0; BSK 1 OFK 1; Smederevo 0 Spartak 0; Vojvodina 2 Indjija 0.
Nov 21: Jagodina 1 Rad 1; Red Star 2 Borac 0.
Nov 27: Vojvodina 4 Smederevo 1; Borac 1 Jagodina 1; Hajduk 1 Cukaricki 1; Indjija 1 Sloboda Sevojno 3.
Nov 28: Spartak 1 Red Star 2; Rad 5 BSK 0; OFK 0 Javor 1; Partizan 5 Metalac 0.
Dec 4: Metalac 1 Hajduk 1; Cukaricki 0 OFK 2; Javor 2 Rad 1; BSK 2 Borac 0; Red Star 2 Vojvodina 2; Smederevo 2 Indjija 1; Partizan 5 Sloboda Sevojno 2.
Dec 5: Jagodina 0 Spartak 1.

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	15	13	1	1	41	11	40
Red Star	15	11	2	2	21	8	35
Vojvodina	15	9	5	1	23	5	32
Rad	15	8	4	3	21	9	28
S Sevojno	15	6	5	4	19	17	23
Spartak	15	5	6	4	15	12	21
Javor	15	5	6	4	12	12	21
Smederevo	15	4	8	3	16	15	20
Jagodina	15	5	5	5	13	13	20
OFK	15	5	4	6	13	13	19
BSK	15	4	5	6	10	20	17
Indjija	15	3	4	8	13	21	13
Borac	15	2	7	6	7	18	13
Metalac	15	2	3	10	9	25	9
Hajduk	15	1	5	9	9	20	8
Cukaricki	15	0	4	11	5	28	4

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SLOVAKIA

Nov 12: DAC 1 Spartak 0.
Nov 13: Dubnica 0 Tatran 1; Kosice 2 Senica 1; Zlate Moravce 0 Dukla 2; Slovan 0 Nitra 0; Zilina 3 Ruzomberok 1.
Nov 19: Senica 2 Zilina 1.
Nov 20: Dubnica 0 Zlate Moravce 4; Tatran 1 DAC 0; Ruzomberok 0 Slovan 0; Nitra 0 Dukla 2; Spartak 0 Kosice 0.
Nov 26: Kosice 4 Tatran 0.
Nov 27: Zlate Moravce 1 Nitra 2; Dukla 1 Ruzomberok 0; Slovan 2 Senica 2; DAC 0 Dubnica 0.
Nov 28: Zilina 1 Spartak 1.

SLOVAKIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	18	10	7	1	38	16	37
Senica	18	9	4	5	22	19	31
Dukla	18	8	6	4	23	12	30
Spartak	18	7	8	3	22	9	29
Slovan	18	6	7	5	28	17	25
Zlate Moravce	18	6	6	6	20	20	24
DAC	18	6	6	6	16	16	24
Nitra	18	6	4	8	15	26	22
Ruzomberok	18	5	5	8	14	22	20
Kosice	18	4	5	9	18	27	17
Tatran	18	4	5	9	12	22	17
Dubnica	18	4	3	11	13	35	15

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

SLOVENIA

Nov 13: Koper 7 Celje 3; Rudar 0 Nafta 0.
Nov 14: Primorje 0 Maribor 0; Triglav 2 Gorica 0; Domzale 2 Olimpija 1.
Nov 20: Celje 3 Primorje 0; Gorica 1 Rudar 1; Nafta 0 Koper 2; Olimpija 1 Triglav 0; Maribor 1 Domzale 1.
Nov 27: Gorica 1 Nafta 0; Maribor 3 Triglav 1; Koper 2 Primorje 1.

SLOVENIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor	19	13	6	0	36	8	45
Domzale	18	11	3	4	28	14	36
Koper	19	9	3	7	30	25	30
Nafta	19	7	4	8	29	30	25
Rudar	18	6	6	6	29	27	24
Gorica	19	6	5	8	20	28	23
Olimpija	18	5	5	8	21	23	20
Triglav	19	5	5	9	20	36	20
Celje	18	4	5	9	26	35	17
Primorje	19	4	4	11	25	38	16

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SPAIN

Saturday, November 13

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 10)
Almeria 0 Att: 34,000

Atletico Madrid 3 (Forlan 26, 70, Aguero 41)
Osasuna 0 Att: 43,000

Barcelona 3 (Villa 22, Messi 58, 83)
Villarreal 1 (Nilmar 26) Att: 80,766

Sunday, November 14

Hercules 2 (Trezeguet 47, Drenthe 52)
Real Sociedad 1 (Griezmann 16) Att: 18,000

Malaga 1 (Eliseu 64)
Levante 0 Att: 25,000

Mallorca 0
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 12,600

Racing Santander 0
Espanyol 0 Att: 13,105

Sporting Gijon 0
Real Madrid 1 (Higuain 82) Att: 25,000

Valencia 2 (Tino Costa 8, David Navarro 63)
Getafe 0 Att: 32,000

Zaragoza 1 (Bertolo 53)
Sevilla 2 (Luis Fabiano 29, Negredo 90) Att: 28,000

Saturday, November 20

Almeria 0
Barcelona 8 (Messi 17, 37, 66, Iniesta 19, Acasiete og 27, Pedro 34, Bojan 61, 72) Att: 13,000

Real Madrid 5 (Higuain 18, Cristiano Ronaldo 29, 61, pen 90+2, Sergio Ramos pen 57)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 39) Att: 79,500

Villarreal 1 (Rossi 73)
Valencia 1 (Aduriz 20) Att: 23,000

Sunday, November 21

Deportivo La Coruna 3 (Adrian pen 21, Colotto 30, Pablo Alvarez 82)
Malaga 0 Att: 10,000

Espanyol 3 (Verdu 15, Osvaldo pen 80, Luis Garcia pen 90)
Hercules 0 Att: 26,110

Levante 3 (Caicedo 23, 27, Stuani 42)
Racing Santander 1 (Lacen 88) Att: 12,000

Osasuna 1 (Shojaei 53)
Sporting Gijon 0 Att: 14,570

Real Sociedad 2 (Llorente 11, Diego Rivas 86)
Atletico Madrid 4 (Forlan 70, Aguero 78, 81, Simao pen 90+5) Att: 24,000

Sevilla 1 (Luis Fabiano 88)
Mallorca 2 (Pereira 35, Webo 90) Att: 40,000

Monday, November 22

Getafe 1 (Colunga pen 49)
Zaragoza 1 (Bertolo 34) Att: 8,000

Saturday, November 27

Atletico Madrid 2 (Tiago 45+1, Aguero 66)
Espanyol 3 (Luis Garcia pen 22, Verdu 52, Osvaldo 78) Att: 30,000

Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 30)
Getafe 3 (Manu pen 56, Miku 58, Pedro Rios 76) Att: 40,000

Zaragoza 0
Villarreal 3 (Senna 9, Cazorla 18, Nilmar 64) Att: 30,000

Sunday, November 28

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Gurpegui 90+2)
Osasuna 0 Att: 36,000

Hercules 3 (Valdez 40, 66, Trezeguet 61)
Levante 1 (Ruben 41) Att: 16,000

Mallorca 2 (Webo 50, Castro 55)
Malaga 0 Att: 12,254

Racing Santander 1 (Rosenberg 60)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 12,086

Sporting Gijon 1 (Gregory 2)
Real Sociedad 3 (Xabi Prieto 10, Zurutuza 45, Aranburu 90) Att: 22,000

Valencia 2 (Soldado 25, 63)
Almeria 1 (Ulloa 90) Att: 35,000

Monday, November 29

Barcelona 5 (Xavi 10, Pedro 17, Villa 55, 58, Jeffren 90)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 97,000

Saturday, December 4

Levante 2 (Nano 3, Caicedo 58)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 11,800

Osasuna 0
Barcelona 3 (Pedro 25, Messi 65, pen 84) Att: 19,000

Real Madrid 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 71, 86)
Valencia 0 Att: 70,000

Sunday, December 5

Almeria 1 (Piatti 78)
Zaragoza 1 (Gabi pen 66) Att: 11,219

Espanyol 1 (Luis Garcia 69)
Sporting Gijon 0 Att: 25,713

Getafe 3 (Pedro Rios 20, 27, Parejo 79)
Mallorca 0 Att: 9,000

Malaga 4 (Eliseu 28, Recio 42, Rondon 51, 53)
Racing Santander 1 (Rosenberg 44) Att: 23,000

Real Sociedad 2 (Xabi Prieto pen 25, San Jose og 48)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 30,000

Villarreal 1 (Nilmar 29)
Sevilla 0 Att: 20,000

Monday, December 6

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Nouioui 73)
Hercules 0 Att: 14,000

SPAIN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	14	12	1	1	41	8	37
Real Madrid	14	11	2	1	35	11	35
Villarreal	14	9	3	2	27	12	30
Espanyol	14	9	1	4	16	15	28
Valencia	14	7	3	4	19	15	24
Real Sociedad	14	7	1	6	21	19	22
Mallorca	14	6	3	5	15	16	21
At Madrid	14	6	2	6	22	19	20
Getafe	14	6	2	6	22	20	20
Sevilla	14	6	2	6	20	23	20
Ath Bilbao	14	6	1	7	21	25	19
Dep Coruna	14	4	5	5	12	16	17
Osasuna	14	4	3	7	12	17	15
Hercules	14	4	3	7	14	21	15
Levante	14	4	2	8	16	23	14
R Santander	14	4	2	8	12	23	14
Malaga	14	4	1	9	19	28	13
Sporting Gijon	14	2	4	8	11	22	10
Almeria	14	1	7	6	10	21	10
Zaragoza	14	1	6	7	13	24	9

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

LEADING GOALSCORERS

16 Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
15 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
9 Fernando Llorente (Athletic Bilbao)
9 Nilmar (Villarreal)
8 Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal)
8 David Villa (Barcelona)

SWEDEN

SWEDEN – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Malmo	30	21	4	5	59	24	67
Helsingborgs	30	20	5	5	49	26	65
Orebro	30	16	4	10	40	30	52
Elfsborg	30	12	11	7	55	40	47
Trelleborgs	30	13	5	12	39	42	44
Mjallby	30	11	10	9	36	29	43
IFK	30	10	10	10	42	29	40
Hacken	30	11	7	12	40	42	40
Kalmar	30	10	10	10	36	38	40
Djurgardens	30	11	7	12	35	42	40
AIK	30	10	5	15	29	36	35
Halmstads	30	10	5	15	31	42	35
GAIS	30	8	8	14	24	35	32
Gefle*	30	7	8	15	33	46	29
Atvidabergs (R)	30	7	8	15	32	51	29
Bro'karna (R)	30	6	7	17	20	48	25

Promoted: Syrianska, Norrkoping
**Gefle beat Sundsvall (3rd in 2nd level) 3-0 on agg in the relegation/promotion play-off to stay up*

Derby delight...River celebrate

ARGENTINA
River win derby clash

A Jonathan Maidana header gave River Plate victory in the *superclasico* against Boca Juniors. The goal ended River's seven-game winless run and handed caretaker coach Juan Jose Lopez his first victory. The result also cost Boca boss Claudio Borghi his job. The 46-year-old resigned and was temporarily replaced by the club's youth coach Roberto Pompei.

BRAZIL
Teen makes his mark

A seven-minute hat-trick from Neymar in the 4-1 win away to Goias made him the second-highest Santos goalscorer in one season in the post-Pele era.

The 18-year-old's treble took his season's tally to 43 and past the 41 scored by Kleber Pereira in 2008. The following week he scored again to reach 44 for the season. Only Serginho Chulapa, who netted 45 in 1983, has a better record in one season.

BOLIVIA
Past champs go down

Oriente Petrolero have won the clausura, but apertura winners Jorge Wilstermann

SWEDISH CUP
Final

Nov 13 - Stockholm
Hammarby 0
Helsingborgs 1 (Jonsson 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,357. **Ref:** Stalhammar

SWITZERLAND

Nov 10: Grasshopper 0 Sion 4.
Nov 13: Bellinzona 3 Xamax 3; Basle 1 Thun 3.
Nov 14: Zurich 2 Young Boys 2; Sion 0 St Gallen 2; Lucerne 3 Grasshopper 2.
Nov 27: Thun 1 Lucerne 1; Grasshopper 2 Bellinzona 3.
Nov 28: Young Boys 2 Sion 1; Xamax 1 Basle 2; St Gallen 0 Zurich 3.
Dec 4: Basle 3 Young Boys 1; St Gallen 0 Xamax 2.
Dec 5: Zurich 0 Thun 0; Bellinzona 0 Lucerne 3; Sion 2 Grasshopper 0.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lucerne	17	9	5	3	41	23	32
Basle	17	9	5	3	36	24	32
Zurich	17	8	6	3	33	24	30
Sion	17	6	6	5	26	18	24
Young Boys	17	6	6	5	23	24	24
Thun	17	4	10	3	24	21	22
Xamax	17	5	3	9	27	35	18
Bellinzona	17	4	6	7	25	36	18
St Gallen	17	5	1	11	17	34	16
Grasshopper	17	2	6	9	17	30	12

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

TURKEY

Nov 12: Konyaspor 0 Kayserispor 1.
Nov 13: Bucaspor 0 Ankaragucu 0; Bursaspor 0 Trabzonspor 2; Gaziantepspor 2 Fenerbahce 1; Eskisehirspor 0 Antalyaspor 0.
Nov 14: Kasimpasa 2 Sivasspor 0; Genclerbirligi 0 Besiktas 2; Istanbul BB 2 Karabukspor 1; Galatasaray 0 Manisaspor 2.
Nov 20: Kasimpasa 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Manisaspor 0 Bursaspor 2; Sivasspor 5 Karabukspor 1; Besiktas 2 Konyaspor 2.
Nov 21: Antalyaspor 0 Gaziantepspor 1; Trabzonspor 0 Eskisehirspor 0; Ankaragucu 2 Istanbul BB 2; Kayserispor 0 Galatasaray 0.
Nov 22: Fenerbahce 5 Bucaspor 2.
Nov 26: Eskisehirspor 2 Manisaspor 1.
Nov 27: Konyaspor 2 Kasimpasa 2; Gaziantepspor 1 Trabzonspor 3; Genclerbirligi 1 Sivasspor 1; Istanbul BB 0 Fenerbahce 1.
Nov 28: Karabukspor 5 Ankaragucu 1; Bucaspor 1 Antalyaspor 0; Galatasaray 1 Besiktas 2.
Nov 29: Bursaspor 2 Kayserispor 0.
Dec 3: Trabzonspor 2 Bucaspor 0.
Dec 4: Manisaspor 2 Gaziantepspor 0; Ankaragucu 1 Sivasspor 1; Kasimpasa 0 Galatasaray 3.
Dec 5: Besiktas 1 Bursaspor 0; Konyaspor 2 Genclerbirligi 1; Fenerbahce 2 Karabukspor 1; Antalyaspor 1 Istanbul BB 0.
Dec 6: Kayserispor 2 Eskisehirspor 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trabzonspor	15	11	3	1	34	9	36
Bursaspor	15	9	4	2	25	10	31
Fenerbahce	15	9	3	3	38	19	30
Kayserispor	15	8	5	2	20	10	29
Besiktas	15	8	3	4	24	15	27
Istanbul BB	15	7	2	6	19	14	23
Antalyaspor	15	6	4	5	17	18	22
Karabukspor	15	6	3	6	26	24	21
Galatasaray	15	6	2	7	18	19	20
Gaziantepspor	15	5	5	5	12	14	20
Manisaspor	15	6	0	9	20	24	18
Ankaragucu	15	4	5	6	20	26	17
Eskisehirspor	15	3	7	5	13	17	16
Konyaspor	15	3	5	7	17	25	14
Genclerbirligi	15	3	5	7	13	23	14
Sivasspor	15	2	6	7	16	31	12
Bucaspor	15	2	5	8	8	20	11
Kasimpasa	15	1	5	9	13	35	8

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

UKRAINE

Nov 12: Obolon 1 Metalurh Donetsk 1.
Nov 13: Illichivets 2 Vorskla 6; Shakhtar 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 1; Metalist 4 Sevastopol 0.
Nov 14: Arsenal 1 Zorya 1; Tavriya 1 Dynamo 1; Karpaty 2 Kryvbas 1; Volyn 1 Dnipro 1.
Nov 19: Sevastopol 0 Arsenal 2.
Nov 20: Zorya 1 Shakhtar 3; Kryvbas 2 Volyn 4.
Nov 21: Metalurh Donetsk 2 Tavriya 1; Vorskla 0 Obolon 1; Dynamo 1 Metalist 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Karpaty 0; Dnipro 2 Illichivets 0.
Nov 26: Illichivets 1 Kryvbas 1.
Nov 27: Tavriya 2 Vorskla 2; Karpaty 4 Zorya 2; Dynamo 2 Sevastopol 0; Metalist 3 Metalurh Donetsk 1.
Nov 28: Shakhtar 4 Arsenal 0; Volyn 1 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Obolon 0 Dnipro 1.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	19	17	1	1	38	7	52
Dynamo	19	12	4	3	35	17	40
Metalist	19	12	2	5	38	19	38
Dnipro	19	10	5	4	27	11	35
Karpaty	19	9	5	5	24	18	32
Volyn	19	8	4	7	20	21	28
Arsenal	19	7	4	8	22	24	25
Vorskla	19	6	5	8	24	22	23
Tavriya	19	6	5	8	30	31	23
Metalurh D	19	6	4	9	21	29	22
Obolon	19	6	4	9	16	24	22
Zorya	19	4	7	8	20	28	19
Kryvbas	19	3	9	7	18	27	18
Illichivets	19	4	6	9	26	45	18
Sevastopol	19	3	5	11	12	32	14
Metalurh Z	19	2	4	13	8	24	10

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Quarter-finals
1st legs - Oct 27-Nov 3; 2nd legs - Nov 10/11
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) v Palmeiras (Bra)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Goias (Bra) v Avai (Bra)
2-2, 1-0 (agg 3-2)
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) v LDU Quito (Ecu)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Tolima (Col) v Independiente (Arg)
2-2, 0-0 (agg 2-2; Independiente on away goals)

Semi-finals
1st legs - Nov 17/18; 2nd legs - Nov 24/25
Goias v Palmeiras
0-1, 2-1 (agg 2-2; Goias on away goals)
LDU Quito v Independiente
3-2, 1-2 (agg 4-4; Independiente on away goals)

Final
1st leg

Dec 1
Goias 2 (Rafael Moura 15, Otacilio Neto 21)
Independiente 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,500. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Goias: Harlei - Ernando, Rafael Toloi, Marcao, Douglas, Amaral, Carlos Alberto, Marcelo Costa (Felipe 86), Wellington Saci, Otacilio Neto (Everton Santos 69), Rafael Moura.
Independiente: Navarro - J Velazquez, Tuzzio, Galeano, Cabrera (Matheu 79), Fredes (M Velazquez 87), Godoy (Rodriguez 46), Battion, Mareque, Parra, Silvera. *Sent off: Silvera 57min.*

ARGENTINA

Apertura
Friday, November 12
Banfield 0
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Huracan 1 (Quiroga og 54)
Colon 2 (Larrivey 34, Goux 85)

Saturday, November 13
Arsenal 0
All Boys 0

Tigre 2 (Morales 24, Stracqualursi 73)
Estudiantes 1 (Benitez 51)

Sunday, November 14
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Blandi 24)
San Lorenzo 0

Independiente 1 (Matheu 58)
Olimpo 1 (Salom 90+1)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Racing Club 2 (Hauche 90, Luguercio 90+4)

Quilmes 2 (Raymonda 2, Caneo 90+2)
Godoy Cruz 1 (Castillo 33)

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Alvarez 59)
Lanus 0

Tuesday, November 16
River Plate 1 (Maidana 54)
Boca Juniors 0

Friday, November 19
Godoy Cruz 2 (Ramirez 10, Sanchez 16)
Banfield 1 (Mendez 90+2)

Saturday, November 20
All Boys 2 (Matos 36, Perea 67)
Newell's Old Boys 0

Estudiantes 2 (Mercado 8, Perez 57)
Huracan 0

Sunday, November 21
Boca Juniors 2 (Araujo 28, Palermo 75)
Arsenal 1 (Lopez 49)

Gimnasia La Plata 0
Velez Sarsfield 0

Racing Club 1 (Hauche 72)
Quilmes 1 (Cerro 69)

San Lorenzo 0
River Plate 0

Monday, November 22
Colon 1 (Fuertes 74)
Independiente 1 (M Velazquez 23)

Lanus 2 (Regueiro 28, 58)
Tigre 0

Olimpo 1 (Aguirre 62)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Niell 81)

Friday, November 26
Arsenal 2 (Obolo 62, Mosca 90+4)
San Lorenzo 1 (Rovira 37)

Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Rojano 33)
Godoy Cruz 3 (Sanchez 12, Ramirez 67, Masuero og 73)

Saturday, November 27
Banfield 1 (Carrusca 25)
Racing Club 2 (Hauche 22, Bieler 26)

Quilmes 2 (Morales 75, Romeo 79)
All Boys 1 (Matos 11)

Sunday, November 28
Independiente 1 (Martinez 46)
Estudiantes 2 (Pereyra 12, Fernandez 86)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Rodriguez 86)
Boca Juniors 0

River Plate 1 (Roman 32)
Olimpo 0

Monday, November 29
Argentinos Juniors 3 (Niell 51, Blandi 78, Hernandez 81)
Colon 0

Huracan 1 (Filipetto 26)
Lanus 2 (Goltz 7, Castillejos 82)

Tuesday, November 30
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Silva 11, Martinez pen 62)
Tigre 1 (Castano 90+1)

Wednesday, December 1
Olimpo 1 (Bareiro 28)
Arsenal 1 (Alustiza pen 11)

did so badly in the closing championship that their points average saw them relegated for the first time.

Next season Jorge Wilstermann will play in the semi-professional regional Cochabamba league as there is no national second division in Bolivia. They will also become the first non top-flight side ever to play in the Libertadores Cup when they take part in the 2011 tournament.

More success...Libertad

PARAGUAY

Velazquez on target

Libertad made sure of their 15th title with a 5-0 drubbing of 3 de Febrero, with Pablo Velazquez scoring twice.

URUGUAY

Defensor's big day

Five clubs went into their final game of the season with hopes of clinching the apertura title but it was Defensor, who had to come from behind to win 3-1 against Tacuarembo, who ultimately triumphed.

VENEZUELA

Tachira almost there

Deportivo Tachira are just one point away from winning the apertura title after they beat Real Esporr 2-0 to overtake their opponents at the top of the table.

Trophy boys...Defensor

Friday, December 3
All Boys 2 (Segovia og 11, Matos 31)
Banfield 1 (Mendez 69)

Racing Club 2 (Hauche 21, Toranzo 61)
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Saturday, December 4
Colon 1 (Moreno y Fabianesi 42)
River Plate 2 (Lamela 56, Pavone 90+4)

Estudiantes 3 (Fernandez 37, Nunez 58, Mercado 75)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Rius 32)

Sunday, December 5
Boca Juniors 1 (Erbes 72)
Quilmes 0

Godoy Cruz 0
Velez Sarsfield 4 (Silva 32, 52, Moralez 56, Cristaldo 83)

Lanus 0
Independiente 0

San Lorenzo 0
Newell's Old Boys 0

Tigre 3 (Stracqualursi 6, 31, Altobelli 38)
Huracan 1 (Zarate pen 29)

ARGENTINA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes	17	12	3	2	26	8	39
Velez	17	11	4	2	29	9	37
Arsenal	17	8	5	4	20	16	29
Racing Club	17	8	4	5	24	15	28
River Plate	17	7	7	3	17	13	28
Godoy Cruz	17	7	6	4	29	22	27
Newell's	17	6	8	3	13	10	26
All Boys	17	7	4	6	21	18	25
Lanus	17	7	4	6	17	20	25
Argentinos	17	6	5	6	20	18	23
Boca Juniors	17	7	2	8	19	19	23
Colon	17	6	5	6	19	27	23
Tigre	17	6	3	8	22	23	21
San Lorenzo	17	5	6	6	16	18	21
Banfield	17	4	7	6	19	17	19
Olimpo	17	4	3	10	17	25	15
Independiente	17	2	8	7	13	24	14
Quilmes	17	2	7	8	12	23	13
Huracan	17	3	4	10	15	31	13
Gimnasia LP	17	2	5	10	9	21	11

19-round tournament (19x1); no relegation after apertura

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Santiago Silva (Velez Sarsfield)
9 Juan Manuel Martinez (Velez Sarsfield)
9 Denis Stracqualursi (Tigre)

BOLIVIA

Clausura

Nov 13: Mamore 2 La Paz 2.
Nov 14: Universitario 2 Aurora 0; San Jose 0 Bolivar 1; The Strongest 1 Guabira 0; Wilstermann 1 Potosi 1.
Nov 21: La Paz 3 Guabira 1; Mamore 3 San Jose 0; Bolivar 4 Universitario 1; Potosi 2 The Strongest 3; Aurora 2 Blooming 1; Oriente 3 Wilstermann 1.
Nov 24: Potosi 1 Oriente 2.
Nov 28: San Jose 1 La Paz 0; Universitario 1 Mamore 1; Blooming 2 Bolivar 0; Wilstermann 1 Aurora 0; The Strongest 1 Oriente 1; Guabira 2 Potosi 0.

BOLIVIA – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oriente	22	12	4	6	38	26	40
Bolivar	22	10	6	6	37	28	36
Aurora	22	10	4	8	34	30	34
San Jose	22	10	4	8	39	37	34
Guabira	22	9	5	8	22	28	32
Blooming	22	9	4	9	28	26	31
Potosi	22	8	5	9	38	35	29
The Strongest*	22	10	2	10	37	36	29
Mamore**	22	7	7	8	21	30	28
La Paz	22	7	5	10	33	36	26
Wil'mann (R)**	22	5	7	10	26	32	22
Universitario	22	5	7	10	24	33	22

**3pts deducted for fielding more than the maximum 3 foreign players in a game*
***Relegation based on average points over two most recent seasons. The team with the worst average, Wilstermann, were relegated automatically; the 2nd worst, Mamore, go into relegation/promotion play-off*

BRAZIL

Nov 10: Ceara 2 Botafogo 2.
Nov 13: Mineiro 4 Flamengo 1; Santos 0 Gremio 0; Corinthians 1 Cruzeiro 0.
Nov 14: Goianiense 3 Palmeiras 0; Internacional 2 Avai 3; Guarani 1 Vitoria 1; Fluminense 1 Goias 1; Paranaense 2 Gremio Prudente 1; Vasco da Gama 1 Sao Paulo 1.
Nov 20: Gremio 3 Paranaense 1; Flamengo 2 Guarani 1; Gremio Prudente 1 Ceara 1.
Nov 21: Botafogo 1 Internacional 2; Sao Paulo 1 Fluminense 4; Palmeiras 0 Mineiro 2; Vitoria 1 Corinthians 1; Avai 3 Goianiense 0; Cruzeiro 3 Vasco da Gama 1; Goias 1 Santos 4.
Nov 28: Corinthians 2 Vasco da Gama 0; Palmeiras 1 Fluminense 2; Flamengo 1 Cruzeiro 2; Botafogo 3 Gremio Prudente 1; Guarani 0 Gremio 3; Mineiro 3 Goias 1; Internacional 1 Vitoria 1; Goianiense 1 Sao Paulo 1; Ceara 1 Paranaense 1; Avai 3 Santos 2.
Dec 2: Gremio Prudente 0 Internacional 3.
Dec 5: Sao Paulo 4 Mineiro 0; Santos 0 Flamengo 0; Vasco da Gama 2 Ceara 0; Fluminense 1 Guarani 0; Cruzeiro 2 Palmeiras 1; Gremio 3 Botafogo 0; Goias 1 Corinthians 1; Vitoria 0 Goianiense 0; Paranaense 1 Avai 0.

BRAZIL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fluminense	38	20	11	7	62	36	71
Cruzeiro	38	20	9	9	53	38	69
Corinthians	38	19	11	8	65	41	68
Gremio	38	17	12	9	68	43	63
Paranaense	38	17	9	12	43	45	60
Botafogo	38	14	17	7	54	42	59
Internacional	38	16	10	12	48	41	58
Santos	38	15	11	12	63	50	56
Sao Paulo	38	15	10	13	54	54	55
Palmeiras	38	12	14	12	42	43	50
Vasco	38	11	16	11	43	45	49
Ceara	38	10	17	11	35	44	47
Mineiro	38	13	6	19	52	64	45
Flamengo	38	9	17	12	41	44	44
Avai	38	11	10	17	49	58	43
Goianiense	38	11	9	18	51	57	42
Vitoria (R)	38	9	15	14	42	48	42
Guarani (R)	38	8	13	17	33	53	37
Goias (R)	38	8	9	21	41	68	33
G Prudente* (R)	38	7	10	21	39	64	28

**3pts deducted for fielding an ineligible player*

Promoted: Coritiba, Figueirense, Bahia, America Mineiro

CHILE

Nov 12: Univ Catolica 2 Huachipato 0.
Nov 13: San Luis 0 Univ Chile 3; Colo Colo 0 Morning 1; Univ Concepcion 1 La Serena 0.
Nov 14: Wanderers 2 Nublense 2; Cobreloa 3 Espanola 1; Palestino 2 Audax Italiano 5; Cobresal 0 San Felipe 0; O'Higgins 0 Everton 0.
Nov 19: San Luis 3 Wanderers 4.
Nov 20: Colo Colo 1 Cobresal 0; Everton 3 San Felipe 0.
Nov 21: Univ Catolica 4 Univ Chile 2; Nublense 2 Univ Concepcion 2; La Serena 0 Palestino 0; Espanola 1 O'Higgins 1; Audax Italiano 1 Morning 0; Huachipato 2 Cobreloa 0.
Nov 26: San Felipe 2 Espanola 4.
Nov 27: Cobreloa 2 Univ Catolica 3; Univ Concepcion 1 Wanderers 2; Everton 1 Audax Italiano 2.
Nov 28: O'Higgins 2 Colo Colo 1; Cobresal 0 La Serena 2; Palestino 3 San Luis 2; Morning 0 Huachipato 3; Univ Chile 1 Nublense 2.
Dec 3: Audax Italiano 1 Univ Chile 2.
Dec 4: La Serena 4 O'Higgins 2; Espanola 2 Cobresal 0.
Dec 5: San Luis 2 Cobreloa 1; Nublense 2 San Felipe 0; Univ Catolica 5 Everton 0; Huachipato 0 Palestino 0; Wanderers 1 Morning 1; Colo Colo 4 Univ Concepcion 2.

CHILE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Catolica	34	23	5	6	77	39	74
Colo Colo	34	22	5	7	67	34	71
Audax Italiano	34	20	5	9	75	58	65
Univ Chile	34	20	4	10	75	48	64
Espanola	34	14	10	10	58	50	52
Huachipato	34	12	12	10	44	40	48
La Serena	34	13	6	15	45	59	45
Wanderers	34	12	9	13	48	52	45
San Felipe	34	12	7	15	38	47	43
Cobresal	34	12	6	16	47	52	42
Palestino	34	11	9	14	35	41	42
O'Higgins	34	10	11	13	46	44	41
Nublense	34	9	13	12	54	66	40
Cobreloa	34	10	9	15	45	47	39
U Concepcion*	34	9	11	14	39	50	38
Morning*	34	9	9	16	34	45	36
Everton (R)	34	8	10	16	38	58	34
San Luis (R)	34	5	9	20	36	71	24

Promoted: Municipal Iquique, Union La Calera
**Univ Concepcion and Santiago Morning go into relegation/promotion play-offs, along with Antofagasta (3rd in 2nd level) and either Curico Unido or Union Temuco, who tied for 4th place in 2nd level and must meet in a special play-off*

COLOMBIA

Clausura

Regular season

Nov 13: Pereira 0 Quindio 0; Indep Santa Fe 3 Huila 0.
Nov 14: America 4 Chico 0; Cartagena 0 Cucuta 2; Cortuiua 0 Once Caldas 3; Envigado 2 Junior 2; La Equidad 0 Dep Cali 3; Tolima 3 Nacional 0; Indep Medellin 3 Millonarios 2.

COLOMBIA – CLAUSURA REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	18	11	3	4	35	15	36
Once Caldas	18	11	3	4	34	26	36
Ind Santa Fe	18	10	5	3	26	13	35
Nacional	18	10	3	5	25	23	33
Quindio	18	9	4	5	25	20	31
Huila	18	8	6	4	28	24	30
Cucuta	18	8	4	6	24	18	28
La Equidad	18	8	4	6	23	23	28
Dep Cali	18	6	8	4	31	23	26
America	18	7	4	7	25	23	25
Ind Medellin	18	5	9	4	22	22	24
Millonarios	18	6	4	8	25	25	22
Chico	18	5	6	7	16	26	21
Junior	18	2	10	6	21	28	16
Cartagena	18	3	6	9	17	29	15
Cortulua (R)*	18	3	4	11	14	30	13
Pereira	18	0	9	9	12	22	9
Envigado*	18	1	6	11	19	32	9

Top 8 entered championship play-off groups
**Relegation based on average points over three most recent seasons. The team with the worst average, Cortulua, were relegated automatically; the 2nd worst, Envigado, go into relegation/promotion play-off*

Group A

Nov 20: Tolima 2 Indep Santa Fe 2; La Equidad 0 Huila 0.
Nov 24: Indep Santa Fe 3 La Equidad 1; Huila 2 Tolima 3.
Nov 27: Indep Santa Fe 2 Huila 1; Tolima 1 La Equidad 1.
Dec 4: Huila 1 Indep Santa Fe 0; La Equidad 1 Tolima 0.

COLOMBIA – CLAUSURA PLAY-OFFS – GP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ind Santa Fe	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Tolima	4	1	2	1	6	6	5
La Equidad	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
Huila	4	1	1	2	4	5	4

6-round group (3x2) – group winners qualify for championship play-off final

Group B

Nov 21: Nacional 1 Quindio 2; Once Caldas 0 Cucuta 0.
Nov 25: Quindio 1 Once Caldas 3; Cucuta 2 Nacional 2.
Nov 28: Quindio 2 Cucuta 1; Nacional 1 Once Caldas 3.
Dec 5: Once Caldas 3 Nacional 2; Cucuta 1 Quindio 0.

COLOMBIA – CLAUSURA PLAY-OFFS – GP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	4	3	1	0	9	4	10
Quindio	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
Cucuta	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Nacional	4	0	1	3	6	10	1

6-round group (3x2) – group winners qualify for championship play-off final

ECUADOR

2nd stage

Nov 10: Emelec 2 Dep Quito 1.
Nov 13: El Nacional 3 Olmedo 1; Independiente 1 Dep Quito 2; Manta 1 Emelec 2.
Nov 14: Cuenca 0 Macara 2; Espoli 2 Univ Catolica 1; Barcelona 1 LDU Quito 1.
Nov 20: Olmedo 2 Manta 2; Dep Quito 5 Univ Catolica 0; Independiente 3 Cuenca 0; Emelec 3 Espoli 1.
Nov 21: Macara 1 Barcelona 1.

KENYA
Four in seven
Hussein Mohamed and Godfrey Njuguna scored as Ulinzi Stars beat Karuturi Sports 2-0 on the final day of the season to win their fourth title in the last seven years.

MADAGASCAR
Sports' first title
Cnaps Sports won their first-ever league title after beating Japan Actuel 2-0.

MAURITIUS
Ex-skipper's success
Pamplemousses, who are coached by ex national captain Henri Speville, won the league.

MOROCCO
FUS win two cups
African Confederation Cup winners FUS Rabat added the Moroccan Cup to their season's trophy haul, beating MAS Fes 2-1 in the Final.

Confederation champs...FUS

SOUTH AFRICA
Record domestic crowd watch Final
Two goals from Sthembiso Ngcobo and one from Siphiwe Tshabalala gave Kaizer Chiefs a 3-0 win over arch-rivals Orlando Pirates in the League Cup Final.

The game was played at Soccer City in front of 91,727 – which was a new record attendance for a domestic game in the country.

SUDAN
Barry's Hilal winner
Al Hilal beat Al Merreikh 3-2 in the Omdurman derby to clinch the championship from their arch-rivals on a dramatic final

Nov 22: LDU Quito 3 El Nacional 1.
Nov 23: LDU Quito 1 Dep Quito 1; Independiente 0 Emelec 1.
Nov 26: Cuenca 2 Dep Quito 0; Barcelona 3 Independiente 0.
Nov 27: Manta 1 LDU Quito 0; Univ Catolica 2 Emelec 3; Espoli 3 Olmedo 0; El Nacional 2 Macara 1.

ECUADOR – 2ND STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	22	14	5	3	42	17	47
Emelec	22	13	7	2	29	12	46
Cuenca	22	12	5	5	32	25	41
Dep Quito	22	11	4	7	35	22	37
Barcelona	22	8	6	8	25	24	30
El Nacional	22	8	5	9	23	23	29
Manta	22	7	6	9	23	33	27
Espoli	22	5	8	9	22	28	23
Olmedo	22	6	5	11	20	33	23
Macara (R)*	22	5	6	11	21	32	21
U Catolica (R)*	22	5	5	12	27	37	20
Independiente	22	5	4	13	23	36	19

LDU Quito qualified for overall championship final
**Relegation based on points gained for 1st and 2nd stages combined. The two teams with fewest, Macara and Univ Catolica, went down*

Promoted: LDU Loja, Imbabura

Overall championship final
(1st stage winners v 2nd stage winners)
1st leg
Dec 5
LDU Quito 2 (Bolanos 51, 90+2)
Emelec 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Alarcon

PARAGUAY

Clausura
Nov 12: Rubio Nu 1 Nacional 1; Olimpia 1 Luqueno 1.
Nov 13: Tacuary 0 Trinidense 1; 3 de Febrero 4 Guarani 0.
Nov 14: Colombia 2 Sol de America 0; Libertad 2 Cerro Porteno 0.
Nov 20: Cerro Porteno 3 3 de Febrero 0.
Nov 21: Trinidense 2 Colombia 2; Sol de America 4 Rubio Nu 0; Luqueno 3 Tacuary 1; Nacional 1 Libertad 0; Guarani 0 Olimpia 0.
Nov 27: Rubio Nu 1 Trinidense 0; Olimpia 2 Tacuary 1; 3 de Febrero 1 Nacional 2.
Nov 28: Colombia 0 Luqueno 0; Libertad 3 Sol de America 0; Guarani 1 Cerro Porteno 2.
Dec 3: Tacuary 1 Nacional 2; Olimpia 1 Trinidense 1.
Dec 4: Rubio Nu 2 Guarani 2.
Dec 5: Luqueno 1 Sol de America 1; Colombia 1 Cerro Porteno 1; Libertad 5 3 de Febrero 0.

PARAGUAY – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	22	16	1	5	46	15	49
Cerro Porteno	22	13	7	2	36	18	46
Nacional	22	12	6	4	29	18	42
Guarani	22	10	6	6	29	22	36
Olimpia	22	7	11	4	31	23	32
Rubio Nu	22	7	7	8	25	32	28
Colombia (R)*	22	5	9	8	23	30	24
Tacuary	22	6	5	11	20	29	23
Sol America	22	5	5	12	20	28	20
3 de Febrero	22	4	7	11	19	34	19
Trinidense (R)*	22	3	9	10	25	46	18
Luqueno	22	2	11	9	21	29	17

**Relegation based on average points over three most recent seasons. The two teams with the worst average, Trinidense and Colombia, went down*

Promoted: General Caballero, Independiente

PERU

2nd stage
Group A
Nov 10: Inti Gas 1 Sporting Cristal 3; San Martin 3 CNI 1; Total Chalaco 0 Jose Galvez 0; Alianza Lima 2 Universitario 2.
Nov 13: Inti Gas 6 Jose Galvez 0; Total Chalaco 0 CNI 2.
Nov 14: Sporting Cristal 0 Alianza Lima 1; Universitario 1 San Martin 0.
Nov 20: CNI 0 Sporting Cristal 2; Jose Galvez 0 Universitario 1.
Nov 21: San Martin 4 Inti Gas 1; Alianza Lima 2 Total Chalaco 1.
Nov 28: San Martin 1 Total Chalaco 2; Jose Galvez 2 CNI 6; Inti Gas 2 Alianza Lima 2; Universitario 1 Sporting Cristal 1.
Dec 3: Total Chalaco 2 Inti Gas 2.
Dec 4: Alianza Lima 1 San Martin 1; CNI 1 Universitario 0.
Dec 5: Sporting Cristal 2 Jose Galvez 0.

PERU – 2ND STAGE: GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
San Martin*	44	28	7	9	87	39	92
Alianza Lima	44	22	12	10	70	48	78
Universitario**	44	21	11	12	55	31	72
S Cristal	44	18	10	16	58	54	64
Inti Gas	44	17	5	22	63	69	56
CNI	44	16	8	20	58	71	56
J Galvez (R)†	44	10	13	21	31	68	43
T Ch'co*** (R)†	44	10	12	22	41	64	40

**San Martin gained a 1pt bonus because their youth/reserve team were runners-up in the 1st stage of their league*
***2pts deducted for failing to pay a former coach*
****2pts deducted for failing to pay a former player*
†The two teams with fewest points, regardless of group, went down

Group B
Nov 9: Melgar 2 Huancayo 0.
Nov 10: Sport Boys 2 Alianza Atletico 2; Leon 0 Cienciano 0; Cesar Vallejo 0 Juan Aurich 0.
Nov 13: Sport Boys 0 Huancayo 2.
Nov 14: Cienciano 0 Cesar Vallejo 0; Leon 3 Alianza Atletico 1; Juan Aurich 2 Melgar 0.
Nov 20: Huancayo 2 Cienciano 2; Cesar Vallejo 2 Sport Boys 2.
Nov 21: Al Atletico 1 Juan Aurich 0; Melgar 1 Leon 2.
Nov 28: Leon 1 Cesar Vallejo 1; Melgar 1 Sport Boys 2; Juan Aurich 2 Cienciano 3; Alianza Atletico 0 Huancayo 0.
Dec 4: Sport Boys 3 Leon 1.
Dec 5: Huancayo 2 Juan Aurich 0; Cienciano 2 Alianza Atletico 1; Cesar Vallejo 2 Melgar 0.

PERU – 2ND STAGE: GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leon	44	24	9	11	77	44	81
Cesar Vallejo*	44	19	11	14	64	48	70
Juan Aurich	44	19	11	14	62	47	68
Huancayo	44	17	8	19	64	60	59
Sport Boys	44	15	8	21	54	78	53
Melgar	44	13	11	20	53	72	50
Cienciano**	44	13	10	21	50	69	47
Al Atletico	44	10	14	20	45	71	44

**Cesar Vallejo gained a 2pt bonus because their youth/reserve team won the 1st stage of their league*
***2pts deducted for failing to pay a former player*

Group winners go into play-off to decide 2nd stage winners

Promoted: Cobresol

URUGUAY

Apertura
Nov 13: Rampla 1 Tacuarembo 0; Danubio 2 Racing 0; Cerro 1 Wanderers 1; Bella Vista 3 Miramar Misiones 2; Defensor 1 Central Espanol 1.
Nov 14: Liverpool 2 Fenix 1; Nacional 0 Penarol 0; River Plate 1 El Tanque Sisley 2.
Nov 20: Rampla 1 Racing 1; Bella Vista 0 Fenix 0; Penarol 0 Defensor 1.
Nov 21: Wanderers 1 River Plate 2; Liverpool 0 Miramar Misiones 0; Central Espanol 1 Tacuarembo 0; El Tanque Sisley 0 Cerro 2; Nacional 2 Danubio 1.
Nov 27: Defensor 1 Nacional 2; River Plate 1 Fenix 2; Cerro 2 Bella Vista 4.
Nov 28: Miramar Misiones 0 El Tanque Sisley 1; Danubio 3 Rampla 3; Tacuarembo 0 Racing 2; Central Espanol 2 Penarol 3; Liverpool 0 Wanderers 2.
Dec 4: Danubio 4 Central Espanol 2; Cerro 2 Liverpool 1; Wanderers 1 Miramar Misiones 1; Racing 2 Penarol 1.
Dec 5: Fenix 0 El Tanque Sisley 1; Tacuarembo 1 Defensor 3; Bella Vista 1 River Plate 0; Rampla 1 Nacional 2.

URUGUAY – APERTURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Defensor	15	9	3	3	31	13	30
Nacional	15	8	5	2	28	18	29
Bella Vista	15	9	2	4	24	18	29
Tanque Sisley	15	8	4	3	21	18	28
Danubio	15	7	5	3	24	14	26
Penarol	15	7	4	4	24	17	25
Wanderers	15	5	6	4	20	16	21
Liverpool	15	5	6	4	18	19	21
Cerro	15	4	7	4	15	16	19
Fenix	15	4	6	5	20	20	18
River Plate	15	5	3	7	16	23	18
C Espanol	15	4	5	6	21	25	17
Racing	15	3	5	7	14	20	14
Rampla	15	2	6	7	19	28	12
M Misiones	15	2	5	8	15	23	11
Tacuarembo	15	1	2	12	10	32	5

No relegation after apertura

VENEZUELA

Apertura
Nov 12: Petare 2 Venezuela 1.
Nov 14: Esppor 1 Caracas 2; El Vigia 0 Tachira 0; Aragua 1 Carabobo 0; Zulia 0 Trujillanos 0; Lara 1 Yaracuyanos 3; Anzoategui 3 Monagas 1; Mineros 2 Caroni 0; Zamora 1 Estudiantes 0.
Nov 19: Zamora 1 Caroni 4.
Nov 20: Carabobo 0 Esppor 0.
Nov 21: Estudiantes 1 Lara 0; Caracas 2 Petare 2; Yaracuyanos 1 El Vigia 1; Tachira 4 Zulia 0; Venezuela 1 Anzoategui 2; Trujillanos 2 Aragua 0; Monagas 0 Mineros 0.
Nov 27: Aragua 0 Tachira 1.
Nov 28: El Vigia 0 Estudiantes 0; Zulia 2 Yaracuyanos 3; Lara 4 Caroni 0; Esppor 1 Trujillanos 1; Mineros 2 Venezuela 2; Anzoategui 3 Caracas 0; Zamora 2 Monagas 1; Petare 1 Carabobo 0.
Dec 1: Zulia 0 Caracas 1.
Dec 5: Carabobo 1 Anzoategui 0; Estudiantes 2 Zulia 1; Yaracuyanos 1 Aragua 0; Monagas 1 Lara 1; Venezuela 2 Zamora 1; Caracas 1 Mineros 0; Caroni 1 El Vigia 0; Trujillanos 0 Petare 1; Tachira 2 Esppor 0.

VENEZUELA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tachira	16	10	5	1	31	11	35
Esppor	16	10	3	3	28	11	33
Petare	16	9	5	2	25	17	32
Caracas	16	10	2	4	21	15	32
Trujillanos	16	7	5	4	19	12	26
Yaracuyanos	16	6	8	2	20	15	26
Anzoategui	16	7	4	5	32	27	25
Aragua	16	7	3	6	19	19	24
Estudiantes	16	6	4	6	17	19	22
Mineros	16	4	7	5	19	19	19
Zulia	16	5	3	8	21	27	18
Monagas	16	4	5	7	24	23	17
Venezuela	16	4	4	8	20	30	16
Carabobo	16	3	6	7	14	20	15
Zamora	16	3	5	8	17	27	14
Lara	16	2	7	7	20	26	13
El Vigia	16	1	8	7	16	24	11
Caroni	16	3	2	11	10	31	11

17-round tournament (17x1); no relegation after apertura

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw
Columbus Crew (USA) v Real Salt Lake (USA)
Cruz Azul (Mex) v Santos Laguna (Mex)
Saprissa (CR) v Olimpia (Hnd)
Toluca (Mex) v Monterrey (Mex)
1st legs - February 22-24; 2nd legs - March 1-3

MEXICO

Apertura
Regular season
Nov 12: Necaxa 1 Pachuca 2.
Nov 13: Monterrey 2 Guadalajara 3; Cruz Azul 1 San Luis 0; Santos 1 Tecos 0; Atlas 2 Tigres 2; Queretaro 1 Jaguares 1.
Nov 14: Toluca 1 Atlante 1; Morelia 3 Puebla 3; America 0 Pumas 1.

MEXICO – APERTURA REGULAR: GP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	17	9	5	3	29	20	32
Santos	17	9	3	5	28	19	30
Tigres	17	6	6	5	24	16	24
Guadalajara	17	4	10	3	16	15	22
Necaxa	17	4	4	9	14	21	16
Tecos	17	4	3	10	18	36	15

MEXICO – APERTURA REGULAR: GP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	17	7	6	4	22	16	27
San Luis	17	8	2	7	21	19	26
Pachuca	17	7	4	6	27	28	25
Toluca	17	5	7	5	18	20	22
Atlante	17	4	4	9	17	27	16
Atlas	17	3	4	10	18	27	13

MEXICO – APERTURA REGULAR: GP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	17	12	3	2	33	13	39
Jaguares	17	6	7	4	21	14	25
Pumas	17	7	4	6	23	24	25
Morelia	17	5	6	6	17	16	21
Puebla	17	5	4	8	21	26	19
Queretaro	17	5	4	8	18	28	19

Top two in each group and the two other teams with most points, regardless of group, qualified for championship play-off quarter-finals. No relegation after apertura

day of the season.

With the pair level on 67 points, Said Mustafa Balla and Lassane Fane scored for Merreikh, but the home side ensured victory with two goals from Mohamed Ahmed Bisha and then the winner from Demba Barry, 12 minutes from time. Al Hilal have now won seven of the last eight Premier League titles, with Al Merreikh breaking that sequence in 2008.

Hero...Barry

AUSTRALIA

Roar record goes on

League leaders Brisbane Roar stretched their unbeaten run in the A-League to a record 15 games with a 3-3 draw away to Melbourne Victory.

In his side's previous game – a 2-2 draw at Wellington Phoenix – Victory's Archie Thompson became the first player to score 50 A-League goals.

On a roll...Roar

TAJIKISTAN

Unbeaten champions

Promoted to the top flight two years ago, Istiqlol Dunshabe – who were unbeaten all season – won their first league title.

THAILAND

Double denied

Chonburi beat league champions Muangthong United 2-1 in the Cup Final.

Quarter-finals
1st legs - Nov 17/18; 2nd legs - Nov 20/21
Jaguares v Santos 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Pachuca v Monterrey 1-1, 3-3 (agg 4-4; Monterrey qualified on better regular season record)
Pumas v Cruz Azul 1-2, 2-0 (agg 3-2)
San Luis v America 0-0, 1-4 (agg 1-4)

Semi-finals
1st legs - Nov 25; 2nd legs - Nov 28
America v Santos 1-2, 3-3 (agg 4-5)
Pumas v Monterrey 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)

Final, 1st leg
Dec 2
Santos 3 (Estrada 22, Quintero 41, Davino og 85)
Monterrey 2 (Suazo 38, Cardozo 54)
HT: 2-1

Final, 2nd leg
Dec 5
Monterrey 3 (Suazo 29, 86, Basanta 72)
Santos 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Archundia
Monterrey 5-3 on agg

UNITED STATES

Championship play-off semi-finals
Nov 13: Colorado 1 San Jose 0.
Nov 14: Los Angeles 0 Dallas 3.

Final (MLS Cup)
Nov 21 - Toronto
Dallas 1 (Ferreira 35)
Colorado 2 (Casey 57, John og 107)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 21,700. **Ref:** Toledo

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final

1st leg
Oct 31
TP Mazembe (DRC) 5 (Kasongo 19, 75, Kaluyituka pen 45, Singuluma 55, 59)
Esperance (Tun) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Djaoupe (Tog)
TP Mazembe: Kidiaba - Kasusula, Nkulukuta, Sunzu, Kimwaki, Mihayo, Kasongo (Kanda 77), Bedi, Kaluyituka, Kabangu (Semakweri 86), Singuluma.
Esperance: Naouara - Afful, Hichri, Chemmam, Ben Mansour, Traoui, Khelifa, Korbi, Eneramo (Ayari 66), Darragi (Derbali 35), Msakni (Toindouba 88).
Sent off: Ben Mansour 24min.

2nd leg
Nov 13
Esperance 1 (Afful 24)
TP Mazembe 1 (Kanda 67)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
TP Mazembe 6-1 on agg
Esperance: Ben Chrifia - Afful, Hichri, Ben Amor, Chemmam (Derbali 78), Ben Youssef, Khelifa (Ayari 56), Korbi, Eneramo, Darragi, Toindouba (Msakni 50). *Sent off: Ben Amor 24min.*
TP Mazembe: Kidiaba - Kasusula, Nkulukuta (Mabele 29), Sunzu, Kimwaki, Mihayo, Kasongo, Bedi, Kaluyituka, Kabangu (Mvete 69), Singuluma (Kanda 46).

CONFEDERATION CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs - Oct 29/30; 2nd legs - Nov 12/14
Al Ittihad (Lby) v FUS Rabat (Mor)
1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2; FUS Rabat on away goals)
CS Sfaxien (Tun) v Al Hilal (Sud)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; CS Sfaxien 5-3 on pens)

Final

1st leg
Nov 28
FUS Rabat 0
CS Sfaxien 0
Ref: Benouza (Alg)

2nd leg
Dec 4
CS Sfaxien 2 (Rouid 44, Zaiem pen 49)
FUS Rabat 3 (Boukhriss 7, Rokki 75, Zouidi 89)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
FUS Rabat 3-2 on agg

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final

Nov 13 - Tokyo
Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (SKo) 3 (Ognenovski 29, Cho Byung-kuk 53, Kim Cheol-ho 83)
Zob-Ahan (Irn) 1 (Khalatbari 67)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 27,308. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Seongnam: Jung Sung-ryong - Ko Jae-sung, Ognenovski, Cho Byung-kuk, Kim Sung-hwan, Kim Tae-youn, Molina, Kim Cheol-ho, Jo Jae-cheol, Cho Dong-geon (Do Nam-kung 89), Song Ho-young (Kim Jin-ryong 80).
Zob-Ahan: Gordan - Ahmadi, Talebi, Mahini, Hosseini, Hadadifar, Kheiri (Ashouri 57), Khalatbari, Castro (Salsali 87), Ghazi, Rajabzadeh (Farhadi 69).

AUSTRALIA

Regular season
Nov 10: Adelaide 2 Perth 0; North Queensland 2 Melbourne Heart 3.
Nov 12: Gold Coast 3 Sydney 1.
Nov 13: Wellington 0 Central Coast 3; Newcastle 3 Adelaide 1.
Nov 14: Melbourne Heart 1 Brisbane 2; Perth 3 Melbourne Victory 1.
Nov 17: Newcastle 1 Brisbane 1.
Nov 18: Melbourne Victory 2 Central Coast 2.
Nov 19: Melbourne Heart 0 Adelaide 2.
Nov 20: Newcastle 1 Wellington 0; Brisbane 1 North Queensland 1.
Nov 21: Sydney 2 Perth 0; Central Coast 2 Gold Coast 3.
Nov 24: Wellington 2 Melbourne Heart 0; Newcastle 1 Central Coast 1; Brisbane 3 Perth 2.
Nov 26: Adelaide 2 Gold Coast 1.
Nov 27: Wellington 2 Melbourne Victory 2; Melbourne Heart 0 Sydney 0.
Nov 28: Central Coast 1 Brisbane 5; North Queensland 1 Perth 1.
Dec 1: Sydney 3 Wellington 1; Gold Coast 1 North Queensland 2.
Dec 3: Melbourne Victory 3 Brisbane 3.
Dec 4: Central Coast 4 Sydney 0; North Queensland 0 Newcastle 2.
Dec 5: Wellington 2 Adelaide 1; Gold Coast 3 Melbourne Heart 0.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brisbane	20	11	8	1	38	18	41
Adelaide	18	10	4	4	29	21	34
Gold Coast	17	8	6	3	23	14	30
Central Coast	17	8	5	4	28	19	29
Wellington	19	6	4	9	23	32	22
Melbourne H	19	5	6	8	18	27	21
Melbourne V	18	4	8	6	24	25	20
Newcastle	16	4	7	5	13	12	19
Sydney	18	4	6	8	21	28	18
Perth	19	4	4	11	18	33	16
N Queensland	17	3	6	8	22	28	15

30-round regular season (10x3) – top 6 will enter championship play-offs. No relegation from this league

JAPAN

Nov 10: Shonan 1 Omiya 3.
Nov 14: Nagoya 2 Omiya 1; Shimizu 5 Shonan 0; Yokohama 1 Tokyo 2; Kawasaki 1 Kashima 2; Urawa 2 Kyoto 0; Montedio 3 Cerezo 3; Vegalta 3 Jubilo 0; Gamba 2 Sanfrecce 0; Albirex 1 Vissel 1.
Nov 20: Vissel 0 Kashima 0; Shonan 0 Nagoya 1; Tokyo 1 Kawasaki 2; Urawa 0 Gamba 2; Vegalta 1 Shimizu 3; Sanfrecce 4 Albirex 0; Cerezo 2 Yokohama 0; Jubilo 0 Montedio 0; Kyoto 0 Omiya 2.
Nov 23: Yokohama 1 Urawa 4; Nagoya 0 Tokyo 1; Gamba 2 Shonan 1; Shimizu 2 Sanfrecce 1; Kashima 1 Jubilo 2; Omiya 2 Vissel 2; Albirex 1 Vegalta 1; Kawasaki 1 Cerezo 2; Montedio 1 Kyoto 0.
Nov 27: Kawasaki 1 Urawa 1; Jubilo 1 Nagoya 2; Gamba 0 Yokohama 2; Vissel 1 Shimizu 0; Omiya 2 Albirex 2; Tokyo 1 Montedio 1; Sanfrecce 1 Vegalta 0.
Nov 28: Kashima 2 Kyoto 1; Shonan 0 Cerezo 4.
Dec 4: Vegalta 1 Kawasaki 1; Montedio 1 Kashima 1; Urawa 0 Vissel 4; Yokohama 0 Omiya 2; Albirex 3 Shonan 1; Shimizu 0 Gamba 3; Nagoya 2 Sanfrecce 1; Kyoto 2 Tokyo 0; Cerezo 6 Jubilo 2.

JAPAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nagoya	34	23	3	8	54	37	72
Gamba	34	18	8	8	65	44	62
Cerezo	34	17	10	7	58	32	61
Kashima	34	16	12	6	51	31	60
Kawasaki	34	15	9	10	61	47	54
Shimizu	34	15	9	10	60	49	54
Sanfrecce	34	14	9	11	45	38	51
Yokohama	34	15	6	13	43	39	51
Albirex	34	12	13	9	48	45	49
Urawa	34	14	6	14	48	41	48
Jubilo	34	11	11	12	38	49	44
Omiya	34	11	9	14	39	45	42
Montedio	34	11	9	14	29	42	42
Vegalta	34	10	9	15	40	46	39
Vissel	34	9	11	14	37	45	38
Tokyo (R)	34	8	12	14	36	41	36
Kyoto (R)	34	4	7	23	30	60	19
Shonan (R)	34	3	7	24	31	82	16

Promoted: Kashiwa Reysol, Ventforet Kofu, Avispa Fukuoka

SOUTH KOREA

Championship play-offs: 1st round
(teams placed 3rd to 6th in regular season table)
Nov 20: Jeonbuk 2 Gyeongnam 0.
Nov 21: Ulsan 1 Seongnam 3.

2nd round
(winners of 1st round ties)
Nov 24: Jeonbuk 1 Seongnam 0.

Semi-final
(team placed 2nd in regular season table v winner of 2nd round game)
Nov 28: Jeju 1 Jeonbuk 0

Jeju qualified for Final, to which Seoul qualified directly as winners of the regular season

Final, 1st leg
Dec 1
Jeju 2 (Bae Ki-jong 27, Santos Junior 52)
Seoul 2 (Damjanovic 59, Kim Chi-woo 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,528. **Ref:** Lee

Final, 2nd leg
Dec 5
Seoul 2 (Jung Jo-gook pen 29, Adilson 74)
Jeju 1 (Santos Junior 25)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 56,759. **Ref:** Choi
Seoul 4-3 on agg

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Nov 13: Hekari United (PNG) 4 Koloale (Sol) 0; Lautoka (Fij) 1 Amicale (Van) 0.
Dec 4: Amicale 2 Koloale 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Amicale	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Lautoka	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Hekari Utd	2	1	0	1	5	2	3
Koloale	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

Group B
Nov 13: Magenta (NC) 1 Tefana (Tah) 0.
Nov 14: Waitakere United (NZ) 1 Auckland City (NZ) 1.
Dec 3: Tefana 1 Auckland City 1.
Dec 4: Magenta 1 Waitakere United 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland City	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Waitakere Utd	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Magenta	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
Tefana	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Group winners qualify for Final

Remaining matchdays*:
February 4/5; February 25/26; March 19
**Delayed round 3 game between Lautoka and Hekari Utd (Group A) now scheduled for Jan 15*

Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

"England shouldn't have the World Cup. They already have everything. For us Russians, it means much, much more"

Arsenal attacker Andrei Arshavin makes a successful pitch for the FIFA big top to head east in 2018

"I've never seen anything like it. If he was an unknown player and didn't have the specialist back-up, he would have already hung up his boots"
Alexandre Galeno, one of the doctors at Corinthians, reveals Ronaldo's ongoing battle with varicose veins

Ten years ago in such a situation, I would have been happy to bring down the curtain"
Clearly more mellow in his advanced years, 65-year-old Internazionale president Massimo Moratti admits that struggling coach Rafa Benitez would have been fired in times gone by

"I live and work in a world where you can't say what you think, can never say the truth. Not being a hypocrite, a diplomat and a coward is my biggest defect"
Jose Mourinho gets to the heart of his modus operandi in an interview with *France Football*

Fragile...Ronaldo

"I've discovered a real problem with the mentality and character of the team"
Wolfsburg boss Steve McClaren commits coaching's cardinal sin – passing the buck to his squad

"Coaching Boca is like having sex with the windows open – you have no intimacy"
Claudio Borghi after resigning as coach of Boca Juniors

"The way he dresses and talks, he always wants to appear like a philosopher. He reminds me a bit of Mahatma Gandhi when he is preparing his team. People say that he has won six trophies, but I could have won six trophies as the coach of the best team in the world"
Zlatan Ibrahimovic on his former boss at Barcelona, Pep Guardiola

"It was the worst game in the history of Real Madrid"
Real Madrid president Florentino Perez on his club's 5-0 defeat by Barcelona

"We may be a village team, but we deserve just as much respect as him and his stupid titles. He's a jerk and a bad colleague"
Sporting Gijon coach Manuel Preciado on Mourinho

"You have my vote"
CONCACAF president Jack Warner promises Prince William that he will back England 2018... only to vote for Russia

"I'm really tired of football and also really tired of the people who work in football. I'm talking seriously. Football is only about money and I don't like it. Players only want money"
Manchester City's Carlos Tevez

Falling out of love...Tevez

"We'll see if Barca are capable of putting eight past us on Monday"
With reference to Barcelona's 8-0 win in Almeria, Real Madrid diva Cristiano Ronaldo expresses misplaced confidence on the eve of the 5-0 drubbing in the *clasico*

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